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*GIOVANNI DUPRÈ.<sup>1</sup>*

*AN ECLOGUE.*

LAWRENCE :

Look down the river—against the western sky—  
The Ponte Santa Trinità—what throng  
Slowly trails o'er with waving banners high,  
With foot and horse! Surely they bear along  
The spoil of one whom Florence honoureth :  
And hark! the drum, the trumpeting dismay,  
The wail of the triumphal march of death.

RICHARD :

'Twill be the funeral of Giovánn Duprè  
Wending to Santa Croce. Let us go  
And see what relic of old splendour cheers  
The dying ritual.

LAWRENCE :

They esteem him well  
To lay his bones with Michael Angelo.  
Who might he be ?

RICHARD :

He too a sculptor, one  
Who left a work long to resist the years.

LAWRENCE :

You make me question further.

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RICHARD :

I can tell  
 All as we walk. A poor woodcarver's son,  
 Prenticed to cut his father's rude designs  
 (We have it from himself), maker of shrines,  
 In his mean workshop in Siena dreamed ;  
 And saw as gods the artists of the earth,  
 And long'd to stand on their immortal shore,  
 And be as they, who in his vision gleam'd,  
 Dowering the world with grace for evermore.  
 So, taxing rest and leisure to one aim,  
 The boy of single will and inbred skill  
 Rose step by step to academic fame.

LAWRENCE :

Do I not know him then ? His figures fill  
 The tympana o'er Santa Croce's gate ;  
 In the museum too, his Cain, that stands  
 A left-handed discobolos . . . .

RICHARD :

So great  
 His vogue, that elder art of classic worth  
 Went to the wall to give his statues room ;  
 And last—his country's praise could do no more—  
 He cut the stone that honoured good Cavour.

LAWRENCE :

I have seen the things.

RICHARD :

He, finding in his hands  
 His life-desire possest, fell not in gloom,  
 Nor froth'd in vanity : his Sabbath earn'd  
 He look'd to spend in meditative rest :  
 So laying chisel by, he took a pen  
 To tell his story to his countrymen,  
 And prove (he did it) that the flower of all,  
 Rarest to attain, is in the power of all.

LAWRENCE :

Yet nought he ever made, that I have learn'd,  
 In wood or stone deserved, nay not his best,  
 The Greek or Tuscan name for beautiful.  
 'Twas level with its praise, had force to pull  
 Favour from fashion.

RICHARD :

Yet he made one thing

Worthy of the lily city in her spring ;  
 For while in vain the forms of beauty he aped,  
 A perfect spirit in himself he shaped ;  
 And all his lifetime doing less than well  
 Where he profess'd nor doubted to excel,  
 Now, where he had no scholarship, but drew  
 His art from love, 'twas better than he knew :  
 And when he sat to write, lo ! by him stood  
 The heavenly Muse, who smiles on all things good ;  
 And for his truth's sake, for his stainless mind,  
 His homely love and faith, she now grew kind,  
 And changed the crown, that from the folk he got,  
 For her green laurel, and he knew it not.

LAWRENCE :

Ah ! Love of Beauty ! This man then mistook  
 Ambition for her ?

RICHARD :

In simplicity

Erring he kept his truth ; and in his book  
 The statue of his grace is fair to see.

LAWRENCE :

Then buried with their great he well may be.

RICHARD :

And number'd with the saints, not among them  
 Who painted saints. Join we his requiem.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

1—2

## THE ETCHINGHAM LETTERS.

## XXIX.

*From Miss Elizabeth Etchingham, the Hotel, Glenfearn, N.B., to Sir Richard Etchingham, 83 Hans Place.*

DEAREST DICKORY,—‘Earthquakes as usual,’ or Laura-quakes, if you object to hyperbole.

What is the meaning of *Annosus*? A telegram came yesterday, addressed Etchingham, signed Leagrave, and consisting of one word—*Annosus*. We none of us knew what it meant. Laura, who, since Mr. McTavish’s expressions of interest in her ‘setting up’ and ‘getting bed and meat,’ has smiled more or less upon him (‘not, of course, like ourselves, but a worthy, well-meaning man’), passed the cryptic and, as we supposed, ‘Unicode’ communication on to him as a last resort. Mr. McTavish laid down his fishing-tackle, the sound of the winding of the reel ceased, and he thought he had a copy of the ‘Unicode’ ‘about’ him. And so he had, and straightway went on to read out, ‘Twins both dead, mother not expected to live.’

Here was unlooked-for news upon a fine summer morning, and Laura, of course, was terribly unnerved at once. The fact that for all our endeavour we could not place the disaster, of which the transmitter was, we supposed, Stephen, hardly served to compose her. Mr. McTavish’s ‘It may be no true,’ our landlord’s ‘Deed I’ve heard o’ waur happenin’,’ and the ‘Na, Davy, that ye ne’er heard o’’ of kind Mrs. McPhail (kind, save when the integrity of her drains is questioned), were intermingled with Laura’s sighs, shivers, and awe-struck utterances expressive of the unexpectedness of Fate—unexpected indeed in a case where, as I have already said, we did not even know upon whom to fasten the calamity. The arrival of the coaches and ‘shar-a-bangs’ drove Laura from the inn door upstairs, and when her audience consisted of but Cynthia and myself we heard again the old story of the want of confidence with which she is treated by the family; the Cimmerian darkness to which she is consigned. ‘Anything might happen without my being prepared, and with an action of the

heart like mine I do not consider it safe.' After a little of this I sent the Camelry, who was weeping in premature sympathy, to the post office with a telegram telling Stephen to repeat the message. Hours of vague surmises, during which Laura dwelt upon the possibility of getting satisfactory mourning in Edinburgh and wondered if Charles were the bereaved husband and father; wondered if Colonel Leagrade had, unbeknown to us, taken to himself a second wife; wondered if Stephen himself had made a secret marriage and waited till now to inform us of the fact. 'Sorrow, Elizabeth, though you may smile (and I think your smiles are very out of place), does soften people, and to whom should Stephen turn in the day of trouble, if not to me?' Mrs. Le Marchant too sat with us and indulged in sepulchral recollections of the mothers and children she had known to be carried off in one fell swoop, and then at last the return telegram came: 'Annumero.' I flew in search of Mr. McTavish. 'Annumero:' 'Book is not yet published.'

'It's a peety folk doesna' say what they mean,' was Mr. McPhail's comment.

All this has so shaken Laura that she feels 'it is not fair to myself' to remain longer at Glenfearn; and consequently the head and shoulders of the Camelry have been buried in travelling trunks since breakfast time. A dentist and a shoemaker are our ostensible reasons for hurrying to Edinburgh. 'Her ladyship says, M'm, that the filling is now out of her tooth (perhaps it's the toughness of the meat has drawn it), and her heel's blistered that dreadful and painful that she don't know how to walk;' but as Mrs. Le Marchant (who has been filling up odd days here between visits) leaves Glenfearn to-morrow, Laura anyway would have found this heathered place unendurable when deprived of her companionship. Mrs. Le Marchant has just proved the hair that prevented the sword of Damocles from falling and causing death from solitude. Laura has confided in her freely, and 'grief is easy to carry when the burden is divided among friends' (I take this reflection from Reynard the Fox's uncle Martin). Your post-card too was wrongly read. 'Don't presume upon the climate' Laura understood to mean that the enervation from which she now suffers is nothing to what she may expect.

With Mrs. Le Marchant as a warning, should I ever have a house to call my own, nothing will induce me to let it and throw myself for months together upon the hospitality of my friends.

The hospitality of our friends is delightful, so long as their hospitality is not our convenience, but to be fitting in visits, eking out one there, and squeezing in another here, I think it is detestable, almost depraving. And then there is a sort of atmosphere, unseverable from formal visits, that comes between oneself and the heart of the country. The very views from the windows become the property of host and hostess as much as do the pictures on the walls. I remember once during a three days' visit to the Leytons hearing Laura praise the nightingale as if she were complimenting Lady Leyton on the musical performance of her niece; and she really spoke of a peculiarly brilliant sunset with a civility that led one to infer that she imputed the splendour of the evening sky to the admirable taste and feeling for colour of Lord Leyton himself.

I am sorry for Charles's disappointment. Minnie is not the first woman, and will not be the last, whose help has been a hindrance to her husband. ('When Job was afflicted, the loss of his wife was not included in his misfortunes,' Mrs. Vivian once observed.) Charles has, however, as you say, established a claim upon his party, and to have established a claim in public, as in private life, is to gain possession of a potent weapon. Let us hope that, if he stands again, Minnie will be too deeply engrossed in 'A Tribute of Tears,' or some other work of imagination, to throw herself 'heart and soul,' as she calls it, into the campaign. Minnie is always posing as something or other. She has lately posed as the devoted 'helpmate,' the colleague as well as wife. (I don't mean that her affection for Charles is a pose, for of course it is not. I only mean she has consciously set herself to play the part.) If we could shift her pose and get her to take temporarily that of *femme incomprise*, or soulful woman linked to a soulless husband, whilst she was occupied in pouring the soul into a novel, Charles, uncompromised by his wife, might succeed in getting mind and body into St. Stephen's. Stephen Leagrade, by sympathy and approval, could possibly bring about this state of things. He has always treated Minnie's literary exploits with gratifying interest, and went the length of describing 'Only a Woman's Heart' as a human document. And then, when Charles had taken his seat, Minnie might be gently pushed into another pose—the pose of the sensible young woman who played with her babies and minded her own business and was as kind and good-hearted as Minnie really is.

To be sure it *is* the *Mona Lisa* that I see as the portrait of your frank, unsophisticated, bicycle-riding Margaret. To revert to truth after this deviation from it, *La Belle Ferronnière* was in my mind when I wrote, and as soon as the letter was posted, I remembered, with staircase memory (staircase memory is allied to staircase wit), that *La Belle Ferronnière* is not, in these latter days, included in Leonardo's works. Have you a mind in which what you know lies dormant at times, and suddenly forces itself—mostly too late for use—upon your consciousness? Certainly not. The mind of Richard is better regulated doubtless. I should like your views of the *Mona Lisa*. Are you fascinated, as I am, or repelled? Had I to put a personality to her, I should choose, I think, that of another Margaret, that of a very far distant Margaret—Marguerite of Navarre. Pater's description of the picture does not please me, but then the beauty of Pater's writing is a beauty I fail to appreciate. I find something meretricious about it, and between that and honest beauty there is to me just the difference that lies between a field of cowslips or a bank of violets and a perfumer's shop.

And when do you do your 'Ring'? I hear from Mrs. Vivian that, on her way to choose a new brougham—'Our old one, as I have been telling John for years, looks as if poor Noah had used it when he drove to the ark'—she saw Minnie and 'that horrible Mrs. Potters (who only goes because she thinks it the right thing to do) tearing hot and hatless down Long Acre.' Mrs. Vivian may be correct as to Mrs. Potters's reason for hearing Wagner, but I resent the general imputation that this or that in art or letters is liked because it is the Fashion. How are we to like that which we do not know? That mysterious influence, the Fashion, hawks ware, pedlar-wise, to and fro. Autolycus was a rogue, but as a distributor of 'lawn' and 'cypress,' 'bugle-bracelet,' 'necklace-amber,' he was of use. And as a distributor, too, that folly, the Fashion, has its use and brings before our notice much that otherwise would bloom unknown.

You excite my curiosity when you speak mysteriously of feeling at the back of your head that you will see more of Mr. Shipley. Is the subtle sensation at the back of your head engendered, Dickory, by anything very tangible that you see before your eyes? Tell me. Thoughts can fly far while one is braiding St. Catherine's tresses. I can see Margaret married and living happily ever after. I believe in William Shipley, for he is

beloved by Alice, and if a brother is beloved by his sister he is not perhaps more wholly bad than you are yourself. And having excited my interest, don't, man-like, relapse into eternal silence on the subject, but tell me all about it, as is your bounden duty. Do not only tell me what you think, but tell me what reasons you have for thinking what you think, so that with my feminine skill in such affairs I may winnow the grain from the chaff of your premises. But, being a man, you are of course very much more communicative, a thousand times less discreet, when you talk than when you write. Being a man, you go in much greater fear of committing yourself upon paper than by word of mouth. And with me, as I am a woman, it is just the other way. And how, if you don't dispute them, do you account for these facts? Is it that the written word remains to rise up and testify, and the waves set in motion by the spoken word are not apparent to our senses, and so the discreet creature—man—speaks, and the indiscreet creature—woman—writes?

This old reason, new to me, for objecting to the hiding of foreheads by fringes of hair I send to Margaret: 'John Rows of Warwick reproached the beaux of his time for suffering their long hair to cover their foreheads on which they had been marked with the Sign of the Cross at their baptism.' The book which tells me this, tells me too that Henry V., when, as Prince of Wales, he 'waited upon his father in order to make his peace, was dressed in a mantle or gown of blue satin full of small eyelet-holes, with a needle hanging by a silk thread at every hole.' Very convenient this if the wearer or his friends wished to darn a rent.

Your observation on the thunder-god of the past and the Iahv -Pignouf of the present reminds me of De Quincey, 'As is the God of any nation such will be that nation,' and so the God of feudal times was 'the great Suzerain to whom even kings pay homage.' As the world grows more merciful, I suppose, it follows that a fuller and fuller measure of mercy will be ascribed to the Deity. The qualities that human nature admires are those with which it invests what it worships. Poor human nature does its best.

"Nor is it possible to thought  
A greater than itself to know."

Cynthia is, I think, distressed. After hearing (from Laura, not from me) that Harry was keen to go to Egypt, she took refuge in her own room. I was afraid of worrying her, but yet, as

she had not reappeared when the Aberdonian waiter (whose attitude the other evening so perfectly illustrates the Persian poem) banged down a great iron tea-tray upon the 'parlour' table, I went in search of her. She was standing gazing forlornly out of the window, with a damp cobweb of a pocket-handkerchief in her hand. Then and there I determined to write to Harry, but half an hour after there came a belated letter that the witch-like old postmistress had till then ignored. The belated letter was from Harry. 'The Rajah will have told you of my plans,' he says. (You have not, atrocious Rajah, told me of his plans definitely.) 'I'm off to-morrow,' he goes on, 'and hope it won't be a case of getting there the day after the fair.' Then a postscript bids me tell Cynthia that Trelawney fattens and flourishes and deigns to accept Margaret as a slave. So now I incline to think I had best not write to Harry. If he is to go, or rather if he has gone, doubts as to the wisdom of his going will but unsettle him. What do you think? Write me a leader on the subject. How I wish he were safely home again! Till he is safely home again (I am touching wood as I write) I shall be for ever imagining ill. I do think for women who have leisure to sit and think, the lively fancy that pictures disaster with a vividness that outvies in vividness the actual is an engine of torture that the Inquisition need not have despised.

I heard from Enticknap yesterday that poor old Merlin had passed away. I wish it had not been in the absence of his family that the dear old dog breathed his last. Enticknap had a great opinion of the dog, as he has of everything that he counts ours, and was solicitous about him according to his lights. When once I inquired why in the world a large potato was pierced with a string and tied to Merlin's collar, Enticknap confessed that they did say a potato carried in the pocket would get the rheumatism out of the bones, and as the old dog had no pocket there was no saying but what the tying it to his collar might serve. (The potato cure for rheumatism is an old Devon superstition. It is supposed that, as the potato softens, the rheumatism lessens. The potato should by rights be placed in the patient's pocket by a member of the opposite sex and unobserved.) Poor old Merlin! The death of a faithful, affectionate, dumb thing hurts surprisingly. I like Carlyle upon the death of Nero: 'Little dim white speck of Life, of Love, Fidelity and Feeling,

girdled by the Darkness as of Night Eternal.' And he could not have believed, he says, that his grief would have been the twentieth part of what it was. I was reading, too, the other day, what Horace Walpole wrote on the death of Madame du Deffand's Tonton. A tenderness for animals was one of Horace Walpole's redeeming points. Enticknap tells me that he has laid old Merlin under the grass on the lawn near the filbert trees. I wish I could persuade you to write Merlin's epitaph. Almost the last verse that my father wrote was an epitaph in Latin on the first Merlin, this Merlin's father. Write something on this dear old dog. I wish I could have seen him again.

We are passing through such a lovely day. Why don't you conquer distance, span space, and come and take a walk? Or if you are lazily inclined, you would find the knoll above the river where a knot of rugged old pines give shade, and grey rocks padded with wild thyme supply seats, a far and away pleasanter resting-place than a lifeless club. Carpets and curtains strike one as lifeless when contemplated from the site of reeds and trees. I should like to see the wind raising the carpets and tossing the curtains of the 'East Indian,' but then I suppose some old clubite would ring passionately for the waiter to close doors and windows. Crash! Here is that 'gran sound,' the thunder of Mr. McPhail's dinner-gong again, and either there will be no walk for me or no dinner. The 'gran sound' is too much for Blair and Atholl's nerves as it is too much for mine. Poor fellows, they flutter from side to side of their cage in wild alarm. Blair and Atholl are not a thousand miles away now from the place from which they take their names. Did you know that of old, Atholl was famous for witches? Two thousand and three hundred of these persons of greater skill than probity were, in the year of grace 1597, drawn up together upon an Atholl hill.

Farewell. I break off to consume mutton.

Your loving sister,

ELIZABETH.

P.S.—Is mutton bracing? Send your next letter to The Thistle Hotel, Princes Street.

(Enclosed in Letter XXIX. Posted at Stirling.)

*After Ossian.*

We went. In the hands of the Camely was the immense dressing-bag of Laura. Filled with everything needless is the immense dressing-bag of Laura. In the thoughts of Laura was the awful fear of enervation. She waked her own sad tale at every step.

I met railway porters in fight. I took the tickets. I alone of all the Etchingshams took the tickets. I felt the strength of my soul.

Stately are Laura's steps in enervation. Stately is Laura on the platforms of railway stations. In her hands are no parcels. The Camely is broken down with parcels. Many are the parcels of the Camely. Many and immense.

O ! wonderful is the enervation of Laura. Wonderful are her fusses and fidgets. Often have I heard that no woman can fuss and fidget as Laura can.

The traveller shrinks in the midst of her journey. She shrinks from a fellow-traveller who eats jam sandwiches. Horror possesses her soul. Horror possesses the enervated soul of Laura.

Fat was the man from Glasgow who ate jam sandwiches. Fat and heated and red. Exulting in the strength of his appetite. O ye ghosts of heroes dead ! behold Laura boxed up in a railway carriage with a fat man eating jam sandwiches. We looked, we wondered. Laura shrank.

### XXX.

*From Miss Margaret Etchingham, Hans Place, to Miss Elizabeth Etchingham, Edinburgh.*

DEAREST AUNT ELIZABETH,—I warn you that this letter is going to be about the Ring, and the Ring only. What else can I write about when the last week has been full of nothing else ? So there. It is a most curious experience to have seen that wondrous work here. In Dresden, three years ago, it seemed quite a part of one's life there ; but it is different here in the midst of London turmoil and traffic. One felt a little mad, starting off at four o'clock in one's evening clothes to be thrilled by Siegfried and Brünnhilde.

And we were thrilled ! I must allow that we were all a little damped the first day by 'Das Rheingold.' It depends so much less on dramatic interest than the other parts, that you want the orchestra and scenery to be perfect. Now, this orchestra might be good enough for the common run of operas, though they would not think so at Dresden or Munich. But it seemed sadly rough and coarse for the magically delicate Rhine music. Then, there were all sorts of little mishaps—and not all very little—in the stage arrangements. The singers were good, and struggled bravely not to be put out. It must have been even worse for them than for us, when a large agitated carpenter was seen crossing the stage instead of the expected Wotan. Poor old Wotan, he had enough to put up with besides having his entrance spoilt.

Two days later we set out undaunted for 'Die Walküre,' and we were much better pleased. It was something of a wrench when we hustled out after the first act, speechless and overwrought from the wonderful love-duet of Siegmund and Sieglinde—to get our dinner. Isn't it a wonderful thing ? You know the music in concerts. But dining between the acts is a good plan ; it enables one to bear up under the emotion ever so much better. It was quaint to see the lovely ladies in opera cloaks and diamonds tripping down Long Acre in the sunlight—but every one took it as a matter of course. We found that the orchestra had pulled itself together and the staging was at least decent, and we could give ourselves up to the splendour of the music.

We were all in love with Fräulein Ternina ; she is a splendid, quite superhuman Brünnhilde. We couldn't make up our minds whether we were more impressed by the dignity of her warning to Siegmund in the second act, or the pathos of her appeal to Wotan at the end, which was quite unutterable and upsetting. I don't mean that she couldn't utter it, because of course she did, but we couldn't speak of it.

Our third night—'Siegfried'—was the most delightful of all ; it is like a happy enchantment. One seems to feel the wind and the sunshine every time when Siegfried blows his horn. We had a good young Siegfried, and he did not put on an aggressively childish manner, as some singers do. He was more than sufficient to cope with the Worm—for it was a very poor, lumbering reptile.

I have a difference with the rest of the party. They won't allow that Mime is a charming person. The cleverness of the

way in which the music fits his odious character without being unmusical is to me particularly pleasing ; but I wonder why Siegfried did not kill him much sooner or set the bear at him. I know I should have done something to him. But what a glorious height of joy the last act rises to after Brünnhilde's awakening ! it is a thing to make one dizzy. Some people still say there are no tunes in Wagner. I suppose they do it merely to annoy—somebody always does. Did not people once complain that there was no tune in Beethoven ?

As for the 'Götterdämmerung,' it left us very weak and crushed, even the strongest of us. But the music is full of beauties, and Ternina and the De Reszkes were superb. It feels too flat and stale to go about ordering dinner when one's inner self is walking with those heroes in bearskins (though I must admit that Hagen's vassals are a poor stagy crowd in London), and Siegfried's horn still rings in one's ears.

Father got more and more excited about it and wanted to hear fuller accounts as it went on. I am sure he will take us to Bayreuth next year. He said we must all come here to supper to be restored after the 'Götterdämmerung,' and we had a very pleasant party, though we were all rather grave. I wish you could have been with us, and I wish you were here now to play over some of the music. Instead of which dinner has to be ordered. O dear, I wish it was all to come over again. Uncle Harry is somewhere in the Mediterranean by this time. I believe he is not allowed to tell anybody what his orders are. All he would say was : 'I wanted to take out Trelawney as a Sudanese orderly, and they won't let me.' Trelawney feels rather flat, too. He is attached to us all, but no one can make him purr like Uncle Harry. Good-bye, dear Aunt Elizabeth. Mrs. Baker is here for orders.

MARGARET.

XXXI.

*From Sir Richard Etchingham, Hans Place, to  
Miss Elizabeth Etchingham, Edinburgh.*

MY DEAR ELIZABETH,—You want facts about Harry : I can only tell you that he has gone to report himself at Cairo, but is to call at Malta and spend some days there for some piece of technical work which either he will not be informed of himself till he is there, or he must not disclose. He has been there before.

You want evidence about my conjectures. Well, you know the distance from Hans Place to the Record Office, and Mr. Shipley of the Record Office has been here on several occasions when a busy man would have been quite justified in using the post, and Margaret has made no remark whatever. Also we have had an interesting little party to view the treasures of the Record Office under Mr. Shipley's guidance, and Margaret showed a much livelier curiosity about medieval paleography than I should have expected. Did you ever see a good American say his prayers to Domesday Book? Of course they are quite right: it ought to be put to bed in state every day with a procession, like the Granth in the golden temple at Amritsar. I should like to call up one of William the Conqueror's Norman clerks and compare notes with him on our respective methods of working a revenue settlement. As far as I can make out from Shipley, they elaborated a language quite as technical as any of our Anglo-Indian slang, so technical indeed that after about two centuries nobody understood it.

Hobbes of Malmesbury is another old fellow I should like to call up, and see how he would make our relations with native states in India fit into his doctrine of absolute, indivisible, inalienable sovereignty. But even in England, according to his principles, we have been living pretty comfortably in sheer anarchy for more than two hundred years. If Landor had known enough law, he might have made a pretty conversation of Hobbes and Selden, disagreeing widely but with mutual respect. I hope your copy of *Leviathan* is a good one; the engraved title-page with the great artificial man made up of little men is too commonly in poor condition. There ought to be a cheap edition, not quite so cheap nor quite so unattractive as the 'Universal Library' reprint, which, however, I was once glad enough to get from Bombay.

Those post-Shakespearian poets of yours (if Leagrave will allow any one but himself to claim any interest in them) seem curiously like our modern minor poets, of whom one or another is always going to dethrone Tennyson, or Browning, or Swinburne, and never does. It is the same story of the generation after the heroes; much deserving work, much excellence in detail, very fine things here and there, but the 'pride and ample pinion' that make the difference between great poetry and good verse-writing nowhere. So far as workmanship goes, the workmanship of our

moderns is, I think, better and more even. Whether their conceits are less violent than Crashaw's or Vaughan's will be for the twentieth century to judge.

But music reigns alone here for the present. Margaret has written to you about the Ring. Now I am free to wish I could have been there too. Did the company add to her enjoyment? Guess for yourself; you know as much as I do.

The only parting blessing I could think of to give Margaret on going to 'Siegfried' was the clown's in 'Antony and Cleopatra,' 'I wish you all joy of the worm.' According to her report, the English stage worm is a very shallow monster, so a critic might well continue in the clown's language, 'This is most fallible, the worm's an odd worm.' Other things seem to have been odd too. 'Spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar' is an English proverb, but when a work of art is in hand, nobody in this country seems to realise the importance of that ha'porth of tar.

After the last night's performance we had the whole party to supper here, including one Crewe of the Chancery Bar, one of the remnant who love learning for its own sake. Charles has mentioned him to me as an unpractical person with no public spirit—meaning thereby, I suspect, ambition. He quotes chapter and verse from seventeenth century books to show that a lawyer ought to be musical. Shipley has made friends with him on the ground of legal antiquities. While they were discussing the various possible meanings of the Ring, Crewe turned upon Shipley and said, 'You are the only person here who will see that the true moral of this trilogy is professional.' 'How do you mean?' 'Why, Loge was the first amateur lawyer, and the gods were punished for taking his bad advice.' 'We all know such wicked advice must be bad,' said Mrs. Newton, taking it, as might be expected, seriously, though she seemed happier than usual. 'He says it was bad law as well as wicked,' explained Shipley: 'Ancient Pistol, I do partly understand thy meaning. Let us hear.' 'Perpend then,' said Crewe. 'Loge tells Wotan it is safe stealing to steal from a thief, and Wotan believes him. But that is dead against the first principles of ancient German law, which have been preserved in our law. You may catch your thief red-handed if you can. If not, taking is keeping until the true owner comes to reclaim his goods, and Alberich had a better right to the treasure than Wotan, unless Wotan would retake it in the name of the Rhine-maidens.' 'But that was just what it did not suit him to do,' I ventured to interpose.

'Yes,' continued Crewe, 'but he ought to have known better, after giving an eye to purchase all the wisdom there was. Anyhow, putting his trust in Loge's thoroughly bad advice was his ruin.' 'Are you sure the point was settled so early?' said Shipley. Here Mrs. Newton called on him to take her away, and indeed it was pretty late.

An epitaph for Merlin, say you? Have not our masters, even Matthew Arnold and George Meredith, commemorated their dachshunds in verse? And who am I that I should botch where they have carved? One could wish that dogs lived longer, or that the long-lived animals were more interesting. A tortoise may be a good heirloom, but is not much of a companion. Even White of Selborne's interest in his old tortoise was more scientific than personal, I think.

What do I think of Mona Lisa? Mona Lisa was not easy to make acquaintance with, and was apt to be alarming during the period of slight acquaintance. She had not many friends, but to the few she had she was adorable, always knowing everything in a quiet way, never in a fuss, never out of temper; one of the women who can be on terms of real friendship, no less, and nothing else, with a man. If she had been seriously angry with any one she would not have said much, but he would have found his plans crossed in some unexpected and particularly unpleasant way. I doubt whether she was often beloved (for the man had need of much daring and of the power to love heroically), or ever in love. If she had loved at all, it would have been so that the world must have heard of it. Other people, and Pater for all I know, may make her out quite different. I don't care if they do, and am not sure that I would take a contradiction from Leonardo himself.

Your loving brother,  
RICHARD.

### XXXII.

*From Miss Elizabeth Etchingham, Edinburgh,  
to Sir Richard Etchingham, London.*

Thistle Hotel, Princes Street, Edinburgh.

Many happy returns of the day, Sir Richard. A very fortunate day, this, for you. (It is not your own birthday to which I refer. Unlike most people, you are only allowed one a year.) I refer to my own.

I really do think, Dickory, it is rather horrid of you to have

forgotten this universal festival. Not one word in your writing, not the ghost of a packet that looks like a present. My wrath is kindled against you. However, lest over severity drive you to despair, I will hint that I'm not implacable, and if you write me a long, long letter and promise me another Helleu etching, I may again like you almost as well as I like Sir Augustus Pampesford—The saints defend us! Richard! Speak of the deil—he—Sir Augustus, is in the room !

• • • • •

With chastened spirit and the worst quill in the world, I return to my interrupted letter. *Eheu!* Sir Augustus is under this very roof—come to Edinburgh to interview Lyon King of Arms; come to look for a shooting; come to be civil to somebody (not to me). I never did see anything quite so solid and solemn as he looked projecting himself into the hotel drawing-room with a Royal Stuart plaid wound about his massive arm.

And the sight of him did not astound Laura as it did me. For once the shock and enervation and nerve prostration were mine. And what did I hear? I heard what led me to suppose that, while ministered to by the waiter from Aber-r-r-rdeen the other evening, we narrowly escaped the sight of Sir Augustus darkening the coffee-room window, shutting out the light of heaven, as his elephantine form descended by ladder from the roof of the station omnibus to the door-steps of the inn. But for some *contretemps* Sir Augustus would, it is plain, have joined us at Glenfearn the evening before last. The shooting he thinks to take is within easy distance of the inn. (Wait a minute, the post has come in.)

Thank you for your letter, dear. You will have heard what Mr. Shipley writes to tell me. Poor Colonel Newton! Frankfort railway station does not seem a suitable departure platform for another world. From what Mr. Shipley says, he died quite suddenly. His servant reports that during an altercation with the porters about the taking of small luggage into the carriage, he fell and never recovered consciousness. I shall be anxious for further news of Alice. I am rather glad that she had already gone back to Suffolk. Not that it can make any vital difference, but the influences of the country are soothing, and those of London are not. She asked Mr. Shipley to write to me and then, later, wrote a few lines herself. 'Why could it not have been

me?' she says. 'I always thought Hubert could have been quite happy if he had married another sort of woman, and now there is an end to all that he might have had, and might have been.'

There came, too, a characteristic, ghoulish letter from Mrs. Ware, Colonel Newton's sister, who has already started off on the tack of 'I should have thought Alice would have wished the remains brought home for interment in the family vault; but this, from what I gather, is not so, &c., &c. . . . Alice herself seems wonderfully well. I have offered to be with her as long as she likes, notwithstanding serious personal inconvenience, but she is expecting Mr. Shipley on his return from Germany, it seems, and meanwhile does not feel the loneliness as one would have expected. For months after Mr. Ware's death I could not be left alone.' Mr. Shipley's note differs wholly in purport. He sees that this shock will give yet another rude shake to Alice's shattered nerves, a far greater shock than news of the signing of her own death-warrant would have been. Charon has the hunter's passion for pursuit and despises willing prey.

Mrs. Vivian writes to tell me that as I am not available she is taking Ada Llanelly to Marienbad. 'It is easier to take her than to shake her off, and now that Eddy Leyton's engagement to Wilfrida Home-Lennox is an accomplished fact, Ada does not give herself the airs that she did when imagining that she was to marry him herself. I heard from Lady Leyton this morning, who is thankful that it is not Ada. She likes the Home-Lennox girl. I certainly should be sorry for a son of mine to marry Ada. She is a regular Becky Sharp; but she will do well enough at Marienbad, and John likes her, as she troubles herself to be civil to him. She would go and sit beside a scarecrow and be civil to it, if it wore a man's coat.' Mrs. Vivian furthermore tells me that Mr. Biggleswade and Ada impressed each other very favourably when last he came to London 'dressed, poor idiot, to look as much like a guardsman as possible and making it plain that no one considered the Church a greater anachronism than he does himself.'

Mrs. Vivian goes on to ask me, 'How would it be if Mr. Biggleswade and Ada Llanelly made a match of it? They have each impressed the other with the sense of social "smartness." Ada wonders how Mr. Biggleswade came to go into the Church' (a wonder after his own heart), 'and he speaks of her as very "good fun" (a verdict after hers). 'She couldn't tolerate life in

our vicarage, but she might tolerate it as the wife of a West or South-west London clergyman who remained in the Church because he thought it would be hard on the poor dowdy old Church if he threw her over, and who preached on secular subjects to a crowd of got-up women painted to their eyes.' So says Mrs. Vivian.

Is it true that Stephen and Mr. Biggleswade are writing a play together? Since I received the 'Unicode' telegram that my last inquiries concerning his book-making produced, I feel shy of putting questions on literary affairs to Stephen.

I did not tell you that while we were at Glenfearn I went over to Dalruogh. It was cowardly not to have gone before, but one side of me has been half crazed, I think, these years; and I have had letters constantly; and I have written constantly, as you know. (A letter had come from Dalruogh the morning of the day on which that foolish Sir Augustus first asked me to marry him.) And when I was at Glenfearn I felt as if I could not face the going there, though I felt too as if I should be sorry always afterwards if I did not. And then Mr. Fraser—Dalruogh, as he is in that country—rode across the moor to Glenfearn one afternoon when the others were out and seemed as if he wished me to come. We had met already at halfway places. He was growing old, he told me, and old folk had not overmuch time for getting their way, and he had a wish to see me there again and to give me one or two things I might care to have. So I went. I was deceitful, I am afraid, in concealing my intention from Laura. But I could not speak of it or have her, or even Cynthia, with me. Some things one can only do and endure alone.

Mr. Fraser still lives by himself. He and the collies—one of them the white collie I christened Fingal, now old and stiff—came out to meet me. The house looks just the same, and the gardens as peaceful and lovely as ever. I used to think how when you came home you would admire those hanging gardens overlooking the river, terrace divided from terrace by old iron gates, and the brilliant flowers thrown into relief by the background of dusky yew. I used to think of the library, too, how much you would like the books. And Mr. Fraser told me I was to tell you in detail of his treasures; they might perhaps tempt you to Dalruogh some day, and for this, he showed me the copy of the Montaigne in which Florio apologises for printers'

and other errors by saying an engagement at Court had absorbed his time ; and the first English New Testament printed at Geneva, and a folio Beaumont and Fletcher with the wreathed portrait, and Hunnis's 'Seven Psalms' and 'Handful of Honeysuckle,' and other rare books of old verse, and black-letter Bibles and wonderful missals, and then about ten folio editions of Horace, and as many Virgils. They would all, he said, go to a ne'er-do-well lad who would sell the lot to pay his racing debts. He had only one son.

We went to the churchyard. I had not seen the stone. The inscription just says, 'Alastair Ian Fraser of Dalruogh. Born January 7th, 1852. Died August 12th, 1891'—from a gun accident. Suddenly—that was better perhaps than illness.

But why had it to be ?

The stone looks quite grey and old, as if it has been there a long while now. Seven years is a long while, and yet it is nothing. A thousand years and but yesterday.

His life was very good while it lasted ; I like to think that. He was very successful in his profession and had interests all round. As keen a soldier as Harry, with a love for things bookish like you, and a love for the country like me. And his father and he were friends ; not only father and son ; and to his mother he was all the world. His dying sent the light out of her sky for ever, and it killed her, I think. I was tougher and young, and got acclimatised to living on in the dark.

I don't know why I am writing this to you, rending my heart but not my garments. Yes, I do know. I want to bring him back into your thoughts, if only for the moment, so that he may live in your memory ; and I have never the fortitude to do it speaking, though I have often tried. For the dead *are* forgotten, Richard. We only pretend that they are not. To all my relations now it is as if he had never lived and died. Laura said to me the other day, 'I think your nerves are getting out of order, Elizabeth ; you wince when you hear a gun.' It is true, I do. But I have not suddenly become what Harry would call gun-shy. I have been so ever since the day of a gun-accident on the moor above Dalruogh.

Mrs. Vivian would say I have had more in not marrying him than if we had been married. The half in such cases is greater,

she declares, than the whole. The saints were mostly unmarried, or married to brutes or shrews, she is fond of announcing. I remember some one saying once, *à propos* of the engagement of a woman she knew, to a man who had been married before, 'I should not be jealous of the woman he married, but of the woman he cared for and did not marry.' 'It's the men and women that are beloved but not married that are canonised.' But there are people in whom there is nothing that disillusionments. Their trifling faults and failings are either lovable or seem to throw their virtues into higher relief. And even if there are graver faults, I don't think that would interfere; unless they were base, ungenerous faults. Pride, hot temper, self-will, obstinacy, arrogance, prejudice; what am I that I could not forgive them all?

It was even harder to pull myself from Dalruogh than the going there had been, and it was evening before I came away. But I shall go back, I think. I think I shall go back soon; I said I would. There, at least, he is not forgotten. His guns and fishing-rods, all the inanimate things, are just as they used to be. And when his father wished me good-bye he said, 'God bless and keep you; we have both the same sorrow in our hearts.'

And then I drove the twelve miles over the hill to Glenfearn, and was met by Cynthia with many caresses, and by Blake with the tidings that 'her ladyship was that alarmed, not knowing where you was, M'm, and them nasty tinkers about, that she's having tea instead of dinner.'

For the rest that I had to say I cannot say it now. Good-bye.

ELIZABETH.

### XXXIII.

*From Sir Richard Etchingham, 83 Hans Place, to Miss Elizabeth Etchingham, Ocean Hotel, St. Kentigerns, N.B.*

DEAREST ELIZABETH,—How should I forget your birthday? It was the binder who was a few days late with his reverent mending of a little old eighteenth-century reprint of Sir John Davis's 'Immortality of the Soul,' which you should receive by this post or the next. I was sure you would not like it re-bound if the old binding could be saved. Sir John pleases me, I confess, better than your later English Platonists. His images are more

noble and sustained, and he does not fly up like a sky-rocket to burst in a shower of crackling little conceits. I don't say he is free from affectations in his minor work. Only an Elizabethan lawyer-poet could have set down that 'Every true wife bears an indented heart, wherein the covenants of love are writ.' But I claim judgment for him, as every man ought to have it, on his best, the 'Nosce Teipsum.' What say you now to this?

As a king's daughter, being in person sought  
Of divers princes, who do neighbour near,  
On none of them can fix a constant thought,  
Though she to all do lend a gentle ear:

Yet she can love a forrain Emperor,  
Whom of great worth and power she hears to be,  
If she be woo'd but by Embassador,  
Or but his letters or his pictures see:

For well she knows that when she shalbe brought  
Into the kingdom where her spouse doth reign,  
Her eyes shall see what she conceiv'd in thought,  
Himself, his state, his glory, and his train.

So while the virgin Soul on Earth doth stay,  
She woo'd and tempted is ten thousand ways,  
By these great powers, which on the Earth bear sway:  
The wisdom of the World, wealth, pleasure, praise:

With these sometime she doth her time beguile,  
These do by fits her Fantasie possess;  
But she distastes them all within a while,  
And in the sweetest finds a tediousness.

The conclusion of the simile is good, but not quite so good.  
And some pages farther on:

Bodies are fed with things of mortal kind,  
And so are subject to mortality;  
But Truth, which is eternal, feeds the mind,  
The Tree of life, which will not let her die.

Heaven waxeth old, and all the spheres above  
Shall one day faint, and their swift motion stay;  
And Time itself in time shall cease to move;  
Only the Soul survives, and lives for aye.

And when thou think'st of her eternity,  
Think not that Death against her nature is,  
Think it a birth; and when thou goest to die,  
Sing like a swan, as if thou went'st to bliss.

Stanzas like these, when one considers the difficulty of handling a philosophical argument in verse, appear to me to place the author's art very high.

True it is that Sir John Davis has not convinced the world that his aspirations amount to proof: nor has any one. For I take it that those who believe in personal immortality on direct conviction, not merely on authority, or as having convinced themselves that they ought to believe on authority, are no very large number. Indeed it is or has been an orthodox opinion that natural reason is not adequate for this purpose. But it is good to aspire. And for once I must disagree with you, though on things almost too sacred to discuss—I mean, when it comes to one's own personal application. Speculation is and ought to be absolutely free, but human weakness can preserve its freedom only by keeping it in general terms. But here is my difference. You say the dead are forgotten; are you not unjust to the remembrance of the few—those who ought to remember—in confounding it with the large inert oblivion of the multitude? No, our dead are not forgotten: least of all, perhaps, when least present to our conscious thought. None of us can really sound the depths of his own memory. They have entered into our lives and work with us, and all that we do is their tribute. For the rest, I am content to be no wiser than the nameless sage whose wisdom was deemed worthy to borrow a name from Solomon. ‘*Justorum animæ in manu Dei sunt.*’

The full solution is not for us now. But somehow, some time—or peradventure as much beyond our measures of time as beyond our limits of space—the rules that keep our day-dreams in order—it is plain in the infinite thought of the One who wakes. If we may not pray with the saints, we can watch with the humble sinners. Which is the greater faith—to think that we have the secret of God's counsels, and can dispense it in daily rations, and earn doles of it by good conduct, or to trust God's knowledge far enough not to be afraid of confessing our ignorance?

Some draw the wine to drink thereof full deep,  
And some i' the mosque their night-long vigil keep—  
Unstedfast all, tossed on a shoreless flood;  
For ONE doth wake; fools in their folly sleep.

So says Omar Khayyám, the real and serious Omar, I conceive, when he rends the veil of his ambiguous conventional imagery

and ceases from his antinomian flings against the formalism of both Mullahs and Súfis. How do I know, you may say, that this and not the other—or one of the others—is the real Omar? Well, I don't; but this and like utterances—not fitting into the common forms even of unorthodoxy—seem far less likely to have been interpolated than the six hundred and one stanzas about wine and moonlight and the lips of the beloved by the lip of the field (the boundary between tilth and wilderness in a country living on irrigation), which scores of versifiers might have written at any time over several centuries. Not that the wine and moon, and so forth, need always have their literal meaning, or only that meaning. My own belief is that the reader is often wilfully left to take his choice as he may deserve: but that is yet another story.

As to more modern literature, it is quite true about Stephen Leagrave and Biggleswade. They are concocting an Elizabethan drama. Not much of it is written, so far as I can make out. Leagrave tells me of interminable discussions on the mint and anise and cummin of archaism. Biggleswade wants it to be written in Elizabethan spelling, with stage directions to impress on the reader at every turn that the action takes place under the conditions of the Elizabethan theatre, on a platform commanded by the audience all round, and with no costumes or scenery. You know—or don't know—that our incomparable Biggleswade is a professed enthusiast for the revival of the pure Elizabethan stage management. Apart from my general objection to Biggleswade and his works, that seems to me one of the queerest fads of an archaizing age—permissible, perhaps, as an occasional curious exercise. Not long ago, when Shipley was in Paris working with his friends at the Ecole des Chartes, he met one of the first living actors of France—one who has had to do with Shakespeare—and told him of these Elizabethan performances in London. The actor's comment was what a Frenchman would call 'brutal' if an Englishman had said it. 'C'est stupide!' What is more, I think Shakespeare would have called it stupid. If Shakespeare made 'four or five most vile and ragged foils' and a few 'chambers shot off' furnish forth the siege of Harfleur and the field of Agincourt, it was not because he liked it so, but because the stage and the property-room of the Globe could do no better for him. He tells us so himself. What is the inference to any one who has not drilled himself into the very lunacy of antiquarian pedantry? Surely that, if Shakespeare could be with us now, he would

applaud Sir Henry Irving to the full, and work the resources of the modern theatre to their utmost capacity. Leagrade is dogmatic enough, but he is too much of a scholar to have broken with all the traditions of rational modern education, and he has not got to the point of despising everything done between 1590 and 1890. So I don't very well see how he and Biggleswade are going to hit it off. The play will no doubt find some one to praise it; Biggleswade has at any rate not neglected the modern art of 'ladling butter from alternate tubs.' But it needs no great skill in fortune-telling to prophesy that it will have none to act it and very few to read.

Do you know the story of the minister at a Scottish funeral giving out the hymn?—'Let us sing hymn No. 297: it was always a favourite hymn with the remains.' Mrs. Ware may sing hymn No. 297 over Colonel Newton if she likes; as indeed she is in duty bound. I shall not pretend to be sorry that poor Mrs. Newton, after apparently throwing away her life, has another chance of living. Margaret is sorry without much pretence, and it can hardly be for Colonel Newton. Shipley took a hurried leave of us before going off to Frankfort to do what has to be done there; after which he will have to give an uncertain amount of time and trouble to putting things in order at home. I know nothing of Colonel Newton's affairs, except that he was the kind of man who is apt to leave most trouble to survivors—that is, he thought he was business-like, and was not. Mrs. Newton probably does not know the difference between a cheque and a bank-note, so Shipley will have to look to everything.

Arthur has come up for the Harrow match, and gone back disgusted with the usual inconclusive result (it seems that nowadays a drawn match is rather to be expected than not); but he is much pleased with his recent promotion to Sixth Form—to be captain of one's house and in Sixth Form is a great matter. Perhaps it is as near the position of a reigning Indian prince—with the house master for Resident and the head-master for Viceroy—as anything this country can show. Meanwhile Shipley and I had spent a half-holiday afternoon and evening at Eton—the very day before Colonel Newton's death was announced. Arthur has most likely written to you since, as he is a pretty good correspondent. He is devoted to Shipley, as you are aware, and wanted very much to entertain him. I don't know which of us enjoyed it most. We rowed up to Boveney weir for a bathe, as

all good Etonians ought when they get the chance; and I am free to maintain that there is no better bathing-place in the world, and none so good, except perhaps in Rosia Bay near Europa Point at Gibraltar. And then tea with Lytewell in his garden—a real individual garden which he has made. Is that admirable type of scholar and gentleman—scholar all over, not merely in Latin verses and such like—threatened with extinction? Does it begin to seem antiquated to our young folk? Not to Arthur; I can answer for him: but he is only one. I hope not. Our public schools are not laid out for commercial seminaries, and will only be beaten at that game if they try. But the humanities have survived the great Useful Knowledge illusion of sixty years ago—an illusion not lasting enough to disturb the slumbers of Aklis with a Master of the Event—and they seem healthy enough for a while yet. ‘And what do you make at your public schools?’ said a worthy *Privat-dozent*, still a little hazy about the idiomatic use of his English verbs, to a well-trained gunner going back to Indian service from his leave. The carefully self-informing German had already ascertained that his examinee had passed into Woolwich from Marlborough. ‘Men,’ said the gunner. And the *Privat-dozent*, having discovered his mistake by further questioning, made a careful note on the annoying refinements of the English verbs *make* and *do*. This was the last time I went out, somewhere off Crete.

Arthur was fuller of Shipley’s praises than ever when he was at home, and Margaret seemed as if it got on her nerves somehow. What does that mean?

If there be anything in so-called Christian Science, Laura will surely be very ill one of these days—I suppose it works both ways.

Your loving brother,

RICHARD.

#### XXXIV.

*From Lady Etchingham, Thistle Hotel, Edinburgh, to Sir Richard Etchingham, 83, Hans Place.*

MY DEAR RICHARD,—Kindly send me Mr. Weekes’s address *at once*. The Follits are away for their holidays—somewhere abroad, I fancy—so there might be delay in receiving an answer from them. I should be obliged if Margaret would have my

bronchitis kettle (the largest of the three) got out of the cupboard in the Bath-room, where I hope it still is, *carefully packed*, and sent to me without losing a post to The Ocean Hotel, St. Kentigerns, N.B. (Grace must clean it thoroughly first.) I have not bronchitis at present, but my breathing since Sunday has not seemed quite free, and did I wait till an attack came on to write for the kettle it might reach me too late, and there is never any harm in being prepared.

We took some pretty drives at Glenfearn, but the air is terribly enervating, and it is scarcely a place to stay in. The food is very indifferent and the attendance thoroughly bad. Elizabeth did not, I think, notice the poorness of the accommodation. She seemed up in the clouds all the time. I was sorry that she should not have told us the day she went over to Dalruogh, but I positively had not the slightest idea of where she was going, and was more surprised than I can express when I heard from Blake, who asked the driver, where she had been. Neither I nor Cynthia know Dalruogh, and we should have enjoyed the drive. As it was, we wasted the day, which was one of the finest we have had. An old invalid gentleman from Bournemouth, with a very objectionable pushing young nurse, took the other landau, and I had to do without my daily drive.

It must have seemed odd to Mr. Fraser that, when we were all in the neighbourhood, Elizabeth should be the only one of the party to call. As that pleasant Mrs. Le Marchant said, it might look as if we were not on good terms for Elizabeth to go off like that by herself. It is much better for people to keep together, and it makes less gossip.

This hotel is very well managed and the beds are good. We go on to St. Kentigerns to-morrow (Mrs. Le Marchant assured me that I might depend upon the east coast of Scotland being most bracing and invigorating), and we expect to be at home on Saturday. Elizabeth will let Mrs. Baker know about dinner when she has looked out the trains. She has now gone off again to St. Giles's. If it can be managed, I shall take Cynthia to Holyrood before we leave. I suppose one ought to see it.

Colonel Newton's sudden death from heat apoplexy is very shocking. Perhaps Mrs. Newton now will be sorry that they did not get on better together. Here, too, it is excessively warm, but the weather may change.

I hope Margaret will see that the *spout* of the kettle is

properly packed, and that the parcel is labelled 'Fragile,' 'With great care,' as well as 'Immediate.'

With kindest love,

Affectionately yours,

LAURA F. ETCHINGHAM.

P.S.—Tell Margaret *without the spout* the kettle is *useless*, and Grace is so terribly heedless that she had better make sure herself that it is all sent and *registered*.

### XXXV.

*From Sir Richard Etchingham, 83, Hans Place, S.W., to the Dowager Lady Etchingham, Ocean Hotel, St. Kentigerns, N.B.*

MY DEAR LAURA,—I am sorry I cannot help you to Mr. Weekes's address, as I have not seen or heard anything of him since he left Much Buckland. Neither do I know Mr. Follett's present address. If you ascertain it and have occasion to write to him, please observe that he spells his name with an *e* and two *t*'s. He is an old-fashioned scholar and particular about such things.

Should Mrs. Le Marchant, with whom I have not the honour to be acquainted, or any other person, trouble you with any more conjectures as to Elizabeth's visit to Dalruogh, you have my authority to tell him or her that I am fully informed of Elizabeth's reasons, and that they are perfectly good.

We can find no bronchitis kettle here at all answering your description, but only an old kettle and a spout which do not fit one another. I should guess that your large kettle went with the rest of your luggage to Glenfearn and has been accidentally left there. If not, I should presume that 'whitesmith' is good Scots for a man who makes, or will make, bronchitis kettles, and that he and they are to be met with in Edinburgh.

London is particularly pleasant and healthy this summer, and cool for the time of year.

Yours affectionately,

RICHARD ETCHINGHAM.

*DANIEL O'CONNELL: A STUDY.*

IN an edition of that appropriately ponderous tome 'Flügel's English and German Dictionary,' which appeared in the early forties, the word 'agitator' is defined by the editor as 'an agitator, Daniel O'Connell especially,' thus conveying to the Teutonic mind, not at that time or even yet well versed in the means of advancing political causes by oratory, that the Liberator, if not the inventor of the system, had first reduced it to an exact science. Here the painstaking investigator had undoubtedly arrived at a real substantial fact. O'Connell was the founder of political agitation as understood to-day. It is, indeed, carried out with many varieties and modifications of method, according to the dispositions and genius of the craftsman, but he was the first man who thoroughly understood how to break the rod of the oppressor without breaking the law in the process. He was at once a landlord, a successful lawyer, and an adroit politician, who held at times the fortunes of English parties in his hands; a devout Catholic, he had a passionate love of liberty in the abstract; the idea of political log-rolling was never in possession of his mind to such an extent that he was prepared to sacrifice his liberalism to his love for Ireland. He refused the solid vote of the slaveholding party, which might have been his whenever he called for it had he promised reciprocal assistance. England may have something to forgive him, but, as Greville truly remarked, 'he was treated with every indignity, and then blamed for his violence.' He was a born fighter, and had to fight with the weapons of his time, but there are some grounds for preferring them to the warlike methods of to-day. The time seems to have arrived, if it did not some years ago, for an exhaustive and critical life of the greatest of Irish politicians, the most gifted and the worst abused of a much-abused people. The lives and memoirs of him at present existing fail to give any adequate picture of this most striking figure, which stands out with such startling prominence during the first fifty years of the century. At present, by gleaning from many fields, we may form some idea of his surroundings, and of the man's own personality, which must have been strangely winning in spite of his somewhat frequent lapses from the accepted standard

of good taste. Consider the case of his contemporaries, from the wearer of the crown downwards, if that be the fitting adverb to employ. When George IV. visited Ireland he employed his leisure time during the voyage in eating goose pie and drinking whisky, singing songs the while; when he did land it was in the last stage of intoxication, 'so that he doubled in sight even the vast number of his faithful servants assembled on the pier to receive him.' Perhaps the shock to the loyal gentry of the sister isle was not so severe as we might suppose, for in conviviality they were, and had long been, more than a match for our own three-bottle men. Pitt, who was no mean wielder of the glass himself, was astonished when he heard of the exploits of Sir Frederick Flood in that direction. 'Five bottles of claret a night without any help?' said the statesman, and Sir Frederick had to admit that it was with the aid of a bottle of port. But wine-drinking, if excessive, when assisted by wit loses some of its grossness, and the wit was more often present on the other side of St. George's Channel than on this. O'Connell in this respect does not seem to have been an offender,<sup>1</sup> but his wit and powers as a *raconteur* must have been the cause of many a cork-drawing. The humours of Irish law courts have been on record since law courts furnished forth jokes new and old, and of these O'Connell possessed an inexhaustible record. He had himself become rapidly and increasingly successful, and his income grew by leaps and bounds. In oratory he always excelled, but it was as a cross-examiner that he made his mark very early in his career. He thoroughly understood the people with whom he had to deal, their likes and dislikes, their inconsistencies and their habits. This adroitness was inborn; it was not the result of practice, and could only be found in one who had a sympathy with human nature, and especially with Irish human nature. It was the same power of sympathy which afterwards made him the leader of a nation. He made his mark on his first circuit. Cross-examining the principal witness for the prosecution, he had to prove that the witness was drunk when the prisoner was in his neighbourhood, but the only answer he could get was, 'I had a share of a pint of whisky.' 'Now tell me, sir,' said O'Connell, 'wasn't your share all but the pewter?' The witness admitted that it was. 'You'll do, sir,' said the old attorney, who

<sup>1</sup> Nor, according to his own account, were his poorer fellow-countrymen. 'I have travelled 600 miles in Ireland,' he said, 'and only saw one drunken man, and he was drinking the health of Father Mathew.'

always makes analogous remarks on these occasions, and the prophecy was fulfilled even more completely than is usual. Many of the stories of his triumphs are authentic enough, but too long to repeat, as they depend for their point entirely upon a long and dexterous cross-examination. But he had some strange experiences with his own clients. Having successfully defended a ruffian against a charge of assault, the grateful culprit said to him, 'Och ! Counsellor, I have no way here of showing my gratitude, but I wisht I saw you knocked down in my own parish, and maybe I wouldn't bring a faction to the rescue.' On a similar charge he managed to secure an acquittal by dexterous handling of the witnesses and jury and confusing a stupid judge. The next year he had to defend the same man on a similar charge, and managed to induce the jury to disagree. Within a year he saw the same blackguardly face scowling over the dock, where its owner was standing charged with piracy. O'Connell got the case dismissed on the ground that the charge was one to be tried in Admiralty, the offence having been committed on the high seas. The prisoner, overwhelmed with gratitude at this third escape from well-merited punishment, raised his eyes and arms to heaven and said, 'Oh ! may the Lord spare you to me !'

Less legitimate means were employed at the time to procure acquittals, and there was an attorney in those days who had a bad pre-eminence in that respect. Perhaps the following device, both for its impudence and ingenuity, has rarely been surpassed, even in the annals of criminal jurisprudence. In an absolutely hopeless case of theft counsel for the defence was instructed to call a certain witness to character. On the appearance of the witness in the box he was of course asked 'What sort of character does the accused bear ?' 'Divil a worse' was the staggering reply. 'A nice witness to character !' said counsel, throwing down his brief in a rage. 'Examine him as to an alibi,' said the attorney. 'Where was prisoner on the day in question ?' 'Near Castlebar' (which was fifty miles from the scene of the alleged crime). 'How do you know ?' 'Because on that night I was returning from the fair, and I saw the prisoner near my house. I would swear to his ugly face anywhere. I saw him from behind a hedge ; he stole some carrots and a new spade given me by my landlord, Lord Shannon. That's the man in the dock, and I wish I had hold of him.' 'It is quite clear we must acquit the prisoner,' said the judge ; 'there is a clear alibi,

Will you swear an information against him, friend?' 'That will I, my Lord, with the greatest pleasure in life.' The witness left the box presumably to proceed to the Crown Office, and the prisoner was discharged. Needless to say that neither prisoner nor witness reappeared. The whole had been ingeniously arranged by the attorney.

In these strange scenes the judges appear to have figured sometimes in a fashion which hardly commends itself to a more decorous age. Lord Norbury, the Chief Justice, was the greatest sinner in this respect, and exercised his wit at the most inappropriate moments and in the least pardonable manner. What could be more brutal than his gibe when sentencing a youth to death for stealing a watch? 'You snatched at time, and, egad, you have caught Eternity.' Charging the jury once, he began thus: 'The name of the defendant in this case is Henry William Godfrey Baker Sterne, and there, gentlemen, you have him from stem to stern. I am free to observe, gentlemen, that if Mr. Henry William Godfrey Baker Sterne had as many Christian virtues as he has Christian names we never should have seen him figuring here.' But wit, even of the baser sort, was not the most notable feature in some occupants of the Bench. There were two stories of a remarkable judge named Day which O'Connell was very fond of telling. 'At Cork Assizes, near the end of a case, Day said to me, "Mr. O'Connell, I must not allow you to make a speech; the fact is I always am of opinion with the last speaker, and therefore I will not let you say one word." "My Lord," said I, "that is precisely why I'll let nobody have the last word but myself if I can help it." I had the last word, and Day charged in favour of my client.' It is not this amiable weakness for the last speaker, but the frank avowal of it, which makes one think that Day must have been a very remarkable judge indeed. Knowledge of law was not, however, one of his strong points. O'Connell, defending a man before him for having stolen some goats, found the theft conclusively proved in spite of his cross-examination of prosecutor's witnesses, so he produced an old Act of Parliament empowering the owners of corn fields, gardens, and plantations to 'kill and destroy all hares, rabbits, and goats trespassing thereon.' O'Connell argued that the legal power of destruction thus given clearly proved that goats were not property. Day charged the jury to that effect, and the prisoner was acquitted!

A strange exploit of one Mr. Justice Foster reminds one of more recent legends regarding judicial ignorance of popular expressions.

This judge was trying five men for a brutal assault and murder. The culprit who had actually dealt the fatal blow was one Denis Halligan. 'I saw,' said the principal witness for the prosecution, 'Denis Halligan, he that is in the dock there, take a vacancy at the poor soul that is kilt and give him a wipe with a cleh-alpeen and lay him down as quiet as a child.' All the five prisoners were convicted ; the first four received seven years each for abetting ; then, proceeding to the fifth, the real culprit, he went on, 'Denis Halligan, I have purposely reserved the consideration of your case for the last. Your crime as being a participator in the affray is doubtless of a grievous nature. Yet I cannot avoid taking into consideration the mitigating circumstances which attend it. By the evidence of the witness it clearly appears that you were the only one of the party who showed any mercy to the unfortunate deceased. You took him to a *vacant seat*, and you *wiped him with a clean napkin*, and (to use the affecting and poetic language of the principal witness) you *laid him down with the gentleness shown to a little child*. In consideration of these circumstances, which considerably mitigate your offence, the only punishment I shall inflict upon you is an imprisonment of three weeks' duration.' So Denis Halligan got off by Foster's mistaking a 'vacaney' for a 'vacant seat,' and a 'cleh-alpeen' for a 'clean napkin.' All of which goes to demonstrate how dangerous it is for judges, even more than other men, to proceed to hasty conclusions without accurately ascertaining the meaning of the premises on which they found them. O'Connell always asserted that he had himself heard the crier at Cork Assizes call out three times, when ordered to clear the Court during the hearing of a certain case, 'All ye blagyards, that arn't lawyers, leave the Court ;' and of all his witnesses we should be inclined to select, as the most delightfully unconscious perpetrator of a bull, the physician who demanded three days' personal expenses on the ground that, having been detained so long as a witness, several patients he was attending would probably have got well in the interval !

O'Connell possessed both physical and moral courage in a high degree. He fought a duel with one of the best shots of his day, and steadily refused to fight again, as we have been reminded in every sketch of the late Lord Beaconsfield's remarkable career. The facts of the fatal encounter between himself and d'Esterre are chiefly interesting from the surrounding circumstances. O'Connell

had in 1815 spoken of the unreformed Dublin corporation as 'beggarly.' To this d'Esterre, as a member of it, took exception, marched up and down the streets of Dublin brandishing a horse-whip, and threatened personal violence against the offender, using at the same time the most insulting language. There was no course open to a public man of the day but to facilitate a meeting, and a duel was arranged. It is now universally believed that d'Esterre was set on by O'Connell's political opponents, and would have been in some way or other rewarded had he been successful. Had O'Connell fallen there would, in all probability, have been a dangerous riot, for the affair had obtained wide notoriety, and crowds were stirring. There seems to have been a large gathering in the field itself, which lay some few miles from Dublin. On the way O'Connell and his friends had to drive over a broken-down bridge. 'See, James,' he said to his brother, 'how little care they take of his Majesty's subjects.' He preserved this serenity of spirit throughout. When they arrived at the ground he saw Jerry MacCarthy, a well-known tailor in Dublin, and keen supporter of his own. 'Ah, Jerry,' he said, 'I never did miss you yet from an aggregate meeting.' His second, Major Macnamara, was very fussy, giving endless directions; O'Connell called to him just before the signal was given, and said, 'I have a last request to make to you.' Macnamara hurried up, thinking a last message was to be sent to the family. 'Don't speak another word, my dear fellow, till the duel is over.' There is nothing, perhaps, very striking in these remarks taken by themselves, but they indicate a charming ease of mind in a tight place, for his friends certainly thought he was going to his death on that February morning. A subsequent adversary of the Liberator, Lord Alvanley, whom he had called 'a bloated buffoon,' and whom Morgan O'Connell vicariously fought, showed as pleasant a wit when, returning unhurt and giving the coachman gold, he said, in reply to the remark, 'That's a lot of money for taking you to Wimbledon, sir,' 'It's not for taking me there, but bringing me back.' But it is easier to jest on the return journey than before facing a dead shot. D'Esterre fell, as is well known, and O'Connell was overwhelmed with remorse. He offered to make a handsome settlement on the widow, which was declined, but some years afterwards, at great personal inconvenience and sacrifice, he went down to some remote assizes to conduct a case for her without fee, and he never passed the house of his late adversary without lifting his hat and offering a prayer for his soul.

O'Connell had need of all his courage when he crossed the Channel to take his seat at St. Stephen's. The battles he had had to wage in his native land were mere child's play to the conflicts that awaited him, and here he had no admiring multitudes to cheer him on his way. Distrust, misrepresentation, and abuse met him on almost every side. Entering the House before the passing of Catholic Emancipation, he was called upon to take two oaths, which he well knew beforehand he could not accept, one to abjure the Pope, and the other to deny the doctrines of the Catholic Church. With ostentatious deliberation, and in the finest tones of his unrivalled voice, he read out the formulae, and said, amid profound silence, 'Mr. Speaker, this I know to be a lie, and that I believe to be one.' He then argued the case for Catholic Emancipation in a speech of four hours. We doubt if his particular style of oratory was the best adapted for the House of Commons;<sup>1</sup> he shone more at a mass meeting. His genius, confined by the cramping conditions of Parliamentary requirements, was described by an observant foreigner as 'a huge plant under a glass shade,' and the sledge-hammer blows which he delivered did not seem always adapted to the scene of the conflict. His style of eloquence was perhaps hardly calculated to touch the highest point of Parliamentary rhetoric. As Sheil said, 'he flung a brood of sturdy ideas upon the world without a rag to cover them.' The House itself, when he came into conflict with it, he treated with but scant respect. In a speech outside he had remarked that it contained 'five hundred scoundrels,' and was not unnaturally called upon to apologise for his language. In the course of his explanation he was much interrupted by the strange sounds emitted by many otherwise inarticulate Tories, which he referred to as 'beastly bellowings.' When called to order by the Speaker he withdrew the epithet 'beastly,' but qualified it by saying that he was not aware of any bellowings which were not beastly. In 1838 he charged the Tory Election Committees with gross bribery, for which he was censured by the Speaker. The admonition he received on his knees in the prescribed manner, and, when it was finished, he rose to his feet, and, slowly dusting his trousers, exclaimed, in an audible whisper, 'What a d----d dirty House!' Scurrilous epithets he hurled in clouds at his opponents, but, to do him justice, they were often neat and exquisitely appropriate. 'That indescribable wretch Brougham' was hardly one of his best efforts, but 'scorpion Stanley,' 'spinning-jinny Peel,' 'Lord

<sup>1</sup> But see Mr. Gladstone in *Nineteenth Century*, January 1889.

Mount-Goose' had more point, though they were not launched in the House itself. Peel's smile was like 'the silver plate on a coffin lid,' and when that statesman in younger days had been Chief Secretary for Ireland O'Connell had alluded to him as the 'shave-beggar of Ireland,' referring to the legendary custom of barbers training their apprentices' hands on the chins of paupers.

The quarrel between Peel and himself at one time, but for outside interference, would have ended in a duel, but it came to an end with a handsome apology on O'Connell's part. His invective in the House was sometimes vigorous to a degree, but he had great provocation. In 1839 Shaw, the Recorder of Dublin, after the murder of Lord Norbury, the cause of which has never been clearly indicated, and does not seem to have been political, moved for a return of Irish crimes. O'Connell attacked him thus: 'You come here to calumniate the country that gave you birth. It is said there are some soils that produce venomous and crawling creatures —things odious and disgusting. Yes, you who cheer, there you are; can you deny it? (Cheers and hisses.) You hiss, but cannot sting,' &c. This sounds a trifle strong, but remember that at the time, at a regimental mess in the North of Ireland, one of the toasts drunk was 'The Pope in the pillory of Hell and the Devil pelting O'Connell at him.' The style of reception he met with in London may be gauged by the following story of his Majesty George IV., on whose visit to Ireland O'Connell had exhibited an exuberant and almost slavish loyalty. When the Liberator attended the levee he saw the royal lips moving, and advanced, thinking he was addressed. The King said nothing to him, and O'Connell afterwards asked the Duke of Norfolk, who was standing by, if the King had not spoken, and if so, what he had said. 'The day you were at the levee,' replied the Duke, 'His Majesty said, as you were approaching, "There is O'Connell; G——d—— the scoundrel!"' Under continual provocation on all sides in this country, is it to be wondered at that he sometimes forgot his own excellent maxim that 'you catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a hogshead of vinegar'?

With some newspapers, especially the 'Times,' his warfare was prolonged and deadly; of the latter journal he said that it was 'like a misplaced milestone, which can never by any possibility tell the truth.' It was 'the venal lady of the Strand.' The revenge of the 'Thunderer' took the form of at least 300 leaders directed against the offender, and in those days leading articles had more weight than they have now. He also had a long quarrel

with the reporters, both English and Irish ; the former he found would not report his speeches in the House, but he brought them to terms by 'seeing strangers' and clearing the galleries of the House until they became reasonable. There is an amusing story, which has the merit of being true, as to the way in which he foiled a Government shorthand writer, who went over to report the speeches at a gigantic meeting on the Land Laws, and found a howling mob of 50,000 people had to be penetrated to reach the platform, so that there was no way of getting there save with the help of the arch-enemy himself. 'Have you had any breakfast ?' said O'Connell ; 'no ?—then come with me.' After the meal was finished he escorted the reporter on to the platform. 'Have you plenty of pencils ? Yes ?—then fire away.' But O'Connell rose and delivered a long oration in *Irish* ! Another reporter who had been a strong supporter of his, and afterwards went over to the other side, was present at a meeting on behalf of a hostile paper, and when O'Connell said, alluding to the attacks of that journal, 'Am I, who have fluttered the Ministry, to be nibbled at by mice ?' he sprang up in a fury and shouted, 'Do you mean to call me a mouse ?' 'I should not be guilty of such a misnomer,' was the reply. 'Every one knows you are a great big rat.' He was a dangerous adversary, even when retaliation on his part would have seemed impossible. At the height of the outcry against him arising from the monster meetings, Sir Edward Sugden, the Irish Lord Chancellor, struck him off the Commission of the Peace. Shortly after the Chancellor informed some one that he intended to pay a surprise visit to the County Lunatic Asylum, of which he was official visitor. Some of O'Connell's friends conveyed information to the keepers that a fussy little man, calling himself the Lord Chancellor, would call shortly, and was to be detained, being really a dangerous lunatic, until the arrival of his relations. When Sugden arrived at the asylum he announced himself as the Lord Chancellor ; he was received with good-humoured laughter, and told that they had three there already. He was then locked in a room without furniture, from which transports of fury failed to release him until, after some twenty-four hours, some one arrived who knew him, and effected his release. For his own sake the Chancellor kept silence, but the Opposition took care that the story should get about in Dublin society, and O'Connell was more than amply revenged.

His deep, passionate, and sincere attachment to his own Church, and his absolute devotion to the cause of any one, friend or foe, whom he believed to be in any way suffering injustice, are the noblest

features in his character.<sup>1</sup> But, strict Catholic though he was, his freedom from intolerance is one of the striking features in his attitude towards other forms of faith. Perhaps it was not without some excusable touch of malice that he told the following story as illustrating the facilities afforded in his day to young men with aristocratic connections towards taking orders in the English Church established in Ireland. A young gentleman, nearly related to a certain great nobleman, desired to succeed to the family living. His theological acquirements not being of a high order, he was fortunate in meeting with a good-natured bishop, who thought to smooth the way by asking him obvious questions at his examination for Deacon's Orders. Even this easy-going prelate was staggered, after many fruitless efforts, by the reply to the question, 'Who is the one Mediator between God and man?' which came promptly, 'The Archbishop of Canterbury.' This more than papal claim on behalf of the See of St. Augustine can hardly have satisfied the good bishop, but the aristocratic candidate did subsequently enjoy the living.

His own countrymen held him rightly in supreme reverence, which was carried to its extreme point by the rustic who began a letter to him—'Awful Sir;' but even in the English Parliament all right judging men respected the purity of his aims. Old Sir Thomas Buckstone, a hardened Tory, said that he was 'the honestest man that ever sat in the House.' Among many other delightful traits in this great man's character we may note that he burned unread anonymous letters, believed that Burke wrote Junius, and refused to give his autograph to the Emperor Nicholas. Of his own particular following in Parliament he had no high opinion; he spoke of them as 'that species of animal with whom I have to carry on my warfare against the common enemy,' and on such a matter his judgment must be accepted as final. In a less irritable moment he might have been induced to make exceptions; but what he did he did single-handed. He had every equipment for a great popular leader in its highest degree, and he used his power to advance his country and not himself. When will some grateful Irishman, duly qualified (and there are many) by experience in affairs and literary skill, give us the adequate and final biography of the greatest of Irishmen?

W. B. DUFFIELD.

<sup>1</sup> Two striking instances of this are recorded by Mr. Gladstone in the most interesting article in the *Nineteenth Century* for January 1889, above referred to.

*THE GOLD OF VINCOSTA.*

## I.

## THE TREASURER.

ONE day, not many years since, the Treasurer of Vincosta, who was also Prime Minister of that inconsiderable South American Republic, called the members of his Government into his presence, and thus addressed them :—

‘ Gentlemen, my mind, continually bent upon furthering the well-being of our noble Republic, has conceived and given substance to a financial scheme of far-reaching consequences, both to our country and to ourselves.’

There was a languid sensation, and the Cabinet, already convinced of Senhor Alesano’s financial genius—he was a Portuguese Jew—prepared to listen.

‘ As you are unhappily aware, the recent serious fall in the price of silver has laid upon our beloved country a burden under which she groans quarterly. Our standard coin, the silver peso, which formerly was worth three-and-ninepence in English money, was reckoned last year at only one-and-ten ; this year I foresee a fall to one-and-nine, and it will not be long, in my judgment, before our once imperial coin must be considered the equivalent of a beggarly eighteenpence. It is true, gentlemen, that by wise and timely legislative enactments we have prevented the traders within the limits of Vincosta from charging as much for their goods as the exchange value of the peso would seem to warrant ; but our control ceases with the boundaries of the Republic. When we pay the interest upon our national debt, upon the capital embarked in our railways, our mines, and our manufactures, when, I say, we meet the obligations of our own personal loans, the peso has only the value which foreigners set upon it. All the capital in Vincosta has come from Europe, and belongs to Europe. Moreover, when you or I, gentlemen, impelled by an overmastering anxiety to acquire the fullest experience in the art of government, reluctantly leave our homes to dwell awhile in foreign cities—whether we go to London, Paris, Vienna, or to our Mother Lisbon

—we find the savings of self-denial and patriotic sentiment reduced automatically by more than half.'

He paused amid murmurs of 'shame.'

'You are rightly indignant,' said Senhor Alesano; 'but anger, though it may be a spur to effort, is of no avail by itself. I myself raged in secret until the flesh fell from my bones and seemed to effect nothing. Yet the emotion of the heart stimulated the energies of the brain. I, gentlemen, did not stop at anger. I thought over all the means by which a poor country becomes rich: I turned my eyes to the wealthy England and forced myself, at the inevitable pecuniary loss, to make a tempestuous voyage to that London where gold can do everything except improve the abominable climate. And at last, at last, I found a remedy.'

By this time the excitement in the Council Chamber had become tremendous. The Treasurer looked around upon the eager faces and smiled grandly.

'I found a remedy, and I have called you together so that you may learn what it is. I will not play with your suspense. What we need in Vincosta is a gold standard. You do not grasp the immense, the splendid significance of this idea? Let me explain. We will suppose for a moment that a gold standard has been established—upon the method by which this can be done I will presently dwell. The standard coin of the Republic would then be gold instead of silver, and the value of our peso would no longer be determined by the price of the silver composing it. It would be in a position similar to that of an English florin or half-crown, both silver coins, which bear a certain fixed proportion of the value of an English gold sovereign. The metal contained in an English half-crown is not worth more than one-and-twopence, yet every one accepts the coin as being worth two-and-six because it is the eighth part of a sovereign. The half-crown is a "token" coin, and its value would be just the same if it were made of tin. Picture to yourselves the happiness we should enjoy in Vincosta if our peso became a "token" coin and were valued, not at a trumpery one-and-ten, but at three-and-nine, the old glorious three-and-nine! Consider the reductions it might be possible to make in the taxes, and imagine yourselves in possession of salaries doubled at one legislative stroke.'

Cries indicative of unbounded admiration rang through the room.

'Let us,' went on Alesano, 'not be influenced by the personal aspects of this great national question. Some of you may suppose that all we have to do is to declare the peso a certain proportion of an imaginary gold coin. Unfortunately this simple declaration, though doubtless effective so far as regarded our Vincostan fellow citizens, would carry no weight whatever in Europe. We pay our debts in Europe, and it is Europe which we must convince of the genuine character of our future currency. A gold standard, to be effective, must be based upon a reserve of hard golden cash.'

Black depression instantly fell upon the Vincostan Cabinet. Growls of dissatisfaction began to be heard, and the name of Alesano was coupled by some to epithets signifying grave disrespect. 'There is not enough gold in Vincosta,' growled the Minister of the Interior, 'to make a pair of handcuffs.' As presumably he knew the Interior, and being Chief of the Police was familiar with handcuffs, his authority was painfully strong. 'Have you included Alesano's rings?' scornfully asked the young Secretary of the Council, pointing to those massive examples of the jeweller's art. 'Base the standard on them.'

Senhor Alesano astutely kept silent until his colleagues had become saturated with discontent. Then he delivered an attack with irresistible force.

'Fools,' cried he harshly, 'who are you to criticise the schemes of your Prime Minister and of the Treasurer of Vincosta? You, who would grovel the more the more you declined towards your native squalor! I offer you a gold standard, I, the one man in Vincosta who has the wit to conceive the idea and the energy to make it profitable, and you call me Jewish pig. Were not the negotiations even now completed I would withdraw—'

He was interrupted by shouts of 'Negotiations completed!' 'Why didn't you say so before?' 'Pardon, noble Alesano.'

'Yes, completed,' resumed the Treasurer calmly, 'while you slept I worked, and now you enter into the fruits of my labours. Listen. The plan was in my mind when I journeyed to London, and on arrival I consulted the great financiers of that great city. You are aware that the credit of Vincosta is at present indifferent. We borrowed the last possible peso a year ago at the time when we mortgaged the Houses of Parliament. Had I tried to negotiate an ordinary currency loan, no one of wealth would have listened, but the words "gold standard" opened all doors and loosened all

banking accounts. Those who had already lent us money burned to lend us more in so sacred a cause. I offered to exchange all our existing depreciated currency paper for Gold Bonds, and the Lord Mayor invited me to a banquet. It was decided by the opulent house of R—— that three millions in 5 per cent. Vincostan Gold Bonds, inscribed at the Bank of England (the Treasurer rolled the sweet words on his tongue), would form a sound basis for our future gold standard, and the millions were guaranteed to me at once.'

'Three million pesos,' shouted the Cabinet in admiration.

'Pesos!' contemptuously returned Alesano. 'Three millions sterling in yellow English sovereigns.'

'As soon as the necessary Acts have been passed by Parliament,' he went on, after the unconscious Minister of the Interior had been adroitly bled by the Secretary of War, 'three millions in English gold will be shipped to us, and deposited in the vaults of the "National Bank of Vincosta." We shall not only restore to our peso its value of 3s. 9d.—that is 16 pesos to 3*l.* English—but we shall issue Bank of Vincostan notes to the amount of at least thirty million pesos payable in gold at sight. These will circulate freely within our dominions, and the issue will give us the control of thirty million pesos—for the purposes—of—State.'

The Prime Minister looked gravely at his Cabinet, and the faces around him all broke into a grin of unfathomable meaning. Then a great wave of cheering dashed against the walls of the Council Chamber.

## II.

### THE RESERVE OF GOLD.

THE magnificent proposal of Senhor Alesano was carried without delay into effect, and for a while the Republic of Vincosta, in the persons of its public servants, displayed signs of unexampled prosperity. Secretaries of State became millionaires (in pesos), heads of departments built handsome villas on the shores of the Pacific, and even plain civil servants lived in circumstances of comfort which were the envy of foreign officials. But all through the happy time, which extended for nearly two years, the day of doom was approaching. No one but the shrewd Treasurer fore-saw the end, and no one but he appreciated the slow steps of its

advance. He was, by virtue of his office, president of the National Bank, and day by day he watched the splendid stock of borrowed gold grow less.

When a man who dwells in Vincosta wishes to send money to his creditor in England, he must either procure gold to the amount of the debt and despatch that, or he must settle a corresponding debt which his creditor, or some other resident in England, owes in Vincosta. In other words, he must purchase a bill payable by England to Vincosta. The debtor selects the method which at the moment happens to be the cheaper. Gold costs something for freight and insurance, and bills also cost something—often a good deal—because they are convenient.

If England had been called upon during these notable two years to pay as much to Vincosta as Vincosta had to pay to England, little gold would have passed, and Alesano's reserve would have remained practically untouched. But this, alas! was not the case. All the capital in Vincosta belonged to England, the farms, the houses, the shops, even the horses and carts in her chief city, Santa Maria, were mortgaged to England; the interest on all her countless debts, public and private, cried out for settlement, and the National Bank had to pay. There were not enough bills payable from England to Vincosta to go round. Everybody wanted them, and only a few of the buyers could be satisfied. Not being able to get bills, what did Vincostan debtors do? They took bank-notes to the National Bank, exchanged them for English sovereigns out of the Treasurer's stock, and remorselessly sent the proceeds back to England.

Senhor Alesano watched the cruel process go on from day to day, and his brow became lined with thought.

One morning he entered his wife's boudoir. 'My dear Therésa,' he said, 'we will go for a cruise of a few months in the yacht. I am wearied with the cares of State.'

The senhora, who was indolently lying on her cushions, merely nodded assent, but there came a strange glitter into her black Spanish eyes.

'To the Islands?' she inquired, after a pause.

'Yes,' said Alesano with emphasis, glancing at the waiting-maid. 'To the Islands.'

The *Vigilante*, Alesano's new steam yacht, had been recently built in the Clyde. She registered 500 tons, and was luxuriously fitted as to her cabins. What was more natural than that Senhor

and Senhora Alesano should take a long holiday on board their charming possession? The departure of so important a political personage as the Prime Minister took some weeks to arrange, and every one had an opportunity of discussing his plans to their minutest details. 'It is the pleasantest season for the Pacific Islands,' pronounced the public opinion of Vincosta.

Shortly before the day of embarkation the President of the National Bank had an important conversation with his Scotch manager, Mr. MacTavish, and the Secretary for War, who, being the head of the greatest spending department in the Republic, was associated with the Treasurer in the direction of the bank.

'MacTavish,' said Alesano, 'how much gold is there in the Bank?'

'Five hundred thousand sovereigns and a few odd notes and pesos.'

Alesano looked at General Bolivar, but the warrior was not disturbed. He did not understand finance.

'How long will that last?' asked the President.

MacTavish reflected. 'Business is slack just now and drafts are small. Unless there is a great increase in the supply of bills we shall be cleared out in six months.'

'What will happen then?'

'We shall not be able to pay our notes, that's all.' MacTavish laughed. A few years before, when agent for a Scottish bank, such a contingency would have stirred his business soul to its depths. Now he laughed. So great is the power of environment.

General Bolivar began to move uneasily. 'I don't understand. What is all this talk of being cleared out? The bank is full of gold. I saw heaps the other day.'

'Precisely,' observed Alesano, 'but when people hold notes representing six times as much, which we are obliged to pay on demand, and there is every reason to suppose that they will "demand" before long, our hold upon those heaps is not secure.'

The General gasped. 'Is it as bad as that?'

'Quite as bad.'

'Why didn't you tell me before?'

'I have tried to do so more than once,' said Alesano, untruthfully; 'but you did not understand me.'

'How long have we before us?'

'You heard what MacTavish said. Six months at the outside.'

'Merciful God, six months! And after that?'

'The old story of the depreciated peso aggravated.'

'And I took my present house for three years,' groaned Bolivar, 'of which two have yet to run. Confound you, Alesano, who is to pay the rent?'

'I don't know. Perhaps you can suggest a remedy?'

'How on earth can I suggest a remedy when I know nothing about your beastly finance?'

'You have not found my finance beastly during the past two years.'

'What a splendid time it has been! There never was such a time in Vincosta before. Make it last a little longer, Alesano, I implore you. What will my wife say when I tell her this awful news?'

The warrior bowed his honoured head in grief.

'Don't tell her at all. I cannot do the impossible, but I can make the good time last a little longer.'

'Not more than six months,' bluntly pronounced Mr. MacTavish.

The Treasurer smiled. 'Can I not? Suppose that our gold were all stolen, MacTavish, what would happen then?'

'We should be ruined at once instead of six months hence.'

'Not if we published the fact of the loss. Our vanished resources would be multiplied so many times by rumour that even sensible business men would credit us with losing millions. We should also have the best possible reason for temporarily suspending the payment of our notes, while steps were being taken to recover the gold from the thieves, or from the bank—which would be responsible.'

'But the Bank is the Vincostan Government.'

'We know that, but no one else does. It is generally believed that the shares of the bank are largely held in England. It is a belief which I have always encouraged.'

'Oh!' said MacTavish, and fell to thinking.

Senhor Alesano's scheme was that the rulers of the bank should steal their own gold, and then advertise the loss over the world. MacTavish turned over the ingenious plan in his sober Scottish mind. At first it seemed absurdly fantastic, but soon he began to detect certain solid advantages.

'Your object is to gain time?'

'Exactly.'

'We should succeed so far, I think. We could suspend pay-

ments in specie under such circumstances without much injury to our credit. I do not think that the peso would quickly depreciate. I suppose that when the public expectation of our speedy recovery of the gold had worn itself out, you would find the stuff and begin a new lease of life.'

'You understand me perfectly, MacTavish. All the delay would be so much clear profit.'

'Very good, I will help; but of course you are responsible.'

'Of course. I and General Bolivar.'

'What's that? what's that?' cried Bolivar. 'I responsible? Well, I don't know that it matters. I am responsible for a good many things. My chief anxiety is about that house.'

It was thereupon arranged that a scientific burglary should take place on the night before Senhor Alesano's departure, and that the gold should be removed to the vaults of the Custom House upon the quay of Santa Maria.

'Our first cruise,' said Senhor Alesano to his wife, 'begins two days hence and lasts for a week.'

'And after that!'

'After that,' he answered slowly, 'if the weather be fair we will bear away for the Islands.'

Senhora Alesano laughed.

The Treasurer's plan was carried out with the attention to detail for which he was remarkable. He himself superintended the operations and was careful to leave just those traces which the police force of the Republic would expect.

'The burglary,' said the Treasurer to his accomplices, 'was performed with the assistance of false keys. As the keys naturally did not fit at first, we will leave some steel filings on the threshold of the strong-room. The boxes of gold were unexpectedly heavy, and the thieves were compelled to drag them along the stone floor. Please assist me, MacTavish, to make the scratches sufficiently deep.'

With the aid of the principal Custom House officer, who of necessity was taken into the conspiracy, the work of transporting the gold was completed. It was an immense task. There were one hundred cases, and each weighed more than a hundredweight.

'I must leave the custody of the national treasure to you,' said Alesano as they stood in the vault of the Custom House. 'Two new locks have been fitted on the door. Here, General Bolivar, is the key of one. I give the other to you, Senhor

Gomez. Every evening you will please examine the vaults together and satisfy yourselves that the gold is safe. And now, farewell. Senhor Gomez, one last caution.'

The Treasurer and the Custom House officer stood for a moment apart from the rest.

' You understand ?'

' Yes. In seven days from to-morrow evening.'

' I shall depend on you.'

' Pardon me, Senhor, but why bring the gold here? It pleases me well, but why ?'

' Because,' said Alesano, ' there is one incorruptible man in Vincosta, and he is the manager of the National Bank.'

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### III.

#### THE ' VIGILANTE.'

A WEEK later, on the day appointed by the Treasurer, Senhor Gomez stood waiting upon the quay at Santa Maria. It was after midnight and extremely dark.

' He is certain to come,' murmured the officer, ' but when or how I do not know. The *Vigilante* has not been heard of since she sailed. I expect the cunning old devil has kept far off until sunset, and is now dashing for Santa Maria at full steam with his lights out. He is equal to anything. If any one else had employed me on such a job, I would have got through both those locks and steamed off with the whole treasure. But it would not do to play tricks with Alesano. He would find me and blow my brains out if I were at the other end of the world.'

Gomez began to laugh quietly to himself.

' Poor old Bolivar! It is delightful to see him come every night with MacTavish, to satisfy himself that all is safe. They came an hour ago, and will come to-morrow when they will take a deal of satisfying. So MacTavish is incorruptible! Ah, they must be rich, those Scotch!'

A distant whistle struck softly upon the Custom House officer's ear. He stared at the black water, but saw nothing. The whistle was repeated. Still he saw nothing, but soon, as he looked, the form of a white-sailed boat was faintly etched on the water.

## THE GOLD OF VINCOSTA.

‘Here he is,’ said Senhor Gomez.

The boat ran swiftly in, followed by another, and out of the first stepped Treasurer Alesano.

‘Good,’ he said quietly, ‘you are a faithful servant, Senhor Gomez.’

‘It is my interest to be faithful, Senhor.’

‘True. That is the best guarantee.’

Three sailors followed Alesano up the stone steps of the quay.

‘The yacht lies two miles out,’ explained Alesano. ‘At sunset she was fifty miles away.’

The party moved quickly towards the door of the Custom House. Gomez drew out his key, but Alesano waved him aside.

‘Yours is not necessary. It was easy to get a double set of keys.’

They entered the vaults where lay the hundred cases.

‘Here is our cargo, lads.’

Then the powerful sailors fell upon the gold, and removed the boxes one by one to the boats, until ninety had been stowed away.

‘The rest are yours, Senhor Gomez,’ said Alesano. ‘The fortune is great, but not greater than the service you have rendered. Can I remove them for you?’

‘If your men will carry them to the water’s edge I shall be relieved. I have a swift launch ready, and in twenty-four hours my fortune and I will both be in Chili.’

‘You are wise. I was about to suggest a similar precaution.’

When the last case had been carried away, Alesano carefully locked the door. ‘To-morrow, or rather this evening, for it is three o’clock, General Bolivar will discover that finance is even more exciting than war. Once more farewell, Senhor Gomez, and may you enjoy your wealth in silence.’

‘It is my interest to be silent, Senhor.’

‘True. That is the surest guarantee.’

The heavily laden boats sailed to where the dark form of the *Vigilante* rolled upon the sea. Alesano saw all the cases safely hoisted on board, and then followed. The captain, an intelligent Scot, stood beside the wheel—all the British men are Scots in Vincosta—and near him Senhora Alesano reclined in a deck chair.

‘Full steam, please, Captain Ritchie,’ cried the Treasurer of Vincosta. ‘Full steam, and shape her course for the Islands—the British Islands.’

Senhora Alesano laughed.

The next day the Treasurer and his wife sat together under the great awning which covered half the deck, and conversed to the agreeable accompaniment of cigarettes.

‘It is all locked away in the spare cabin. No one knows what it is, not even Captain Ritchie. The scheme was a pretty one and worthy of you, my Therésa.’

‘Nay, it was yours.’

‘You are generous, my beautiful. We were *collaborateurs*. The most excellent part,’ he went on, ‘is the innocence of Treasurer Alesano. He was away on the Pacific in his yacht; he trusted to the vigilance of Bolivar and MacTavish, to the integrity of Gomez. Alas, what a perfidy was that of Gomez! He to abscond with half a million in gold sovereigns, what an incredible villain! That is what Bolivar and MacTavish are crying. No one else will know anything at all, and neither Bolivar nor MacTavish dare tell the little which they really do know. They are robbers who have themselves been robbed. What humiliation is theirs! They will do nothing but wait for Alesano to return in order that he may put everything right. And Alesano will not return. He flies to England in the company of his beautiful Therésa, his dear one whom he has at last made rich. It was a perfect scheme.’

‘Quite perfect,’ assented the Senhora.

‘In no country is a fortune so safe as in England. Ah, those Consols, expensive but solid; those railway debentures; those loans of corporations! When the minute arrives to pay, there flies a cheque! The English do not ask for time and offer bills at three months. No, no. They send a cheque, payable on the instant, on the British nail. I shall put all the money in Consols, and in railways, and in stocks of corporations. We will spend 13,000*l.* of interest every year, and all the while the principal money will be as safe as if in the Bank of England.’

‘Safer than in the Bank of Vincosta?’

Alesano laughed. ‘Much safer, my Therésa. We will not live in England except for a few months in the short summer. We will pass the winter in sunny Spain, or in the South of France, in Algiers or in Egypt. Wherever we please—that is, you please—we will go, for we shall be rich, my Therésa.’

‘But if it is discovered at any time where the gold has gone?’

'Ha, ha! I shall laugh, that is all. I am the Prime Minister of Vincosta, and I have always set my face against the treaties of extradition which some nations make with others. Vincosta is alone in splendid isolation. She has no treaties.'

'It was useful to have been Prime Minister.'

'Most useful,' said Alesano.

So the happy days passed throughout the long voyage. The intelligent Scottish Captain Ritchie shaped an excellent course through seas which were always calm. It was the winter season in the Pacific, a season of warm days and cool nights like an English summer. The vessel coaled at Hong Kong and again at Aden, and then passed up the Red Sea into the Mediterranean.

'We draw near England now,' said the Treasurer. 'A short two weeks, and the gold will be turned into paper, and we shall begin to calculate our dividends.'

'I like gold best,' said the simple Therésa.

One bright sunny afternoon the *Vigilante* steamed between the wooded banks of Southampton Water, and came to her moorings in the docks.

'Let us go ashore,' appealed Therésa; 'I am weary of ship quarters and ship food. Let us have an English dinner and sleep upon a soft English bed.'

Alesano thought of his five tons of gold coin, and the dead weight of it gave him confidence.

'It is safe in the cabin. Yes, my beautiful, we will sleep ashore to-night.'

'Do not leave the yacht,' said he to Captain Ritchie. The Captain nodded. 'I prefer to stay aboard, sir.' An invaluable man was Captain Ritchie, a man to win the confidence of even a Portuguese Jew. A sense of admiration for his captain was in Alesano's mind as he went ashore. 'The gold is as safe with Ritchie as with me. Ah, these Scotch, they are incorruptible!'

An English hotel was grateful to the voyagers after the long confinement of their yacht. A vessel, however large and sumptuous, can never be large or sumptuous enough. Its limitations are too inexorable.

Shortly after ten o'clock the following day, while taking a morning stroll, Alesano sauntered into the docks that he might look again upon his yacht. He arrived at the place of mooring, but the *Vigilante* was not there. He scanned all the ships in the docks, but the *Vigilante* was not one of them. Then he spoke to

an official. 'Where have you put my yacht, the *Vigilante*?' He spoke easily, for alarm had not yet come to him.

'The *Vigilante*?' replied the official. 'Is that the yacht from South America which came in yesterday? She coaled last night, and sailed at daybreak.'

'Sailed!' cried Alesano. 'Sailed! Impossible!'

'It is true. Perhaps you had better speak to the harbour master.'

Alesano followed the courteous official. Not even yet had the conviction of his terrible loss forced itself upon him. A mistake must have been made. The yacht was his; her cargo of gold was his. No man, and certainly not the honest sailor Ritchie, could have been so inconceivably base as to rob him.

'Yes, sir,' the harbour master was speaking. 'She coaled late last night, or early this morning, and at four o'clock she left the dock. The captain stated that the owner was aboard.'

'I am the owner. Man, she was my yacht. Everything I possess in the world was on board.'

The harbour master shrugged his shoulders. 'She is out of the jurisdiction by now.'

Alesano rushed to the dock gates, boarded a cab, and drove straight for his hotel.

'My wife,' he cried, 'where is my wife?'

'Mrs. Alesano,' said the grave landlady—her honest British tongue rejected all foreign designations—'Mrs. Alesano went out half an hour ago, and drove with her luggage to the station. She asked for the next train to London, and I told her 10.15. It is now 10.30.'

'She asked for the 10.15 and it is now 10.30,' murmured Senhor Alesano. 'It is now 10.30.'

Then he fainted.

Twenty-four hours passed before Senhor Alesano was able to bend his mind to the dreadful subject which claimed his attention. The flight of his Therésa, his beautiful, following as it did the flight of Captain Ritchie with the yacht and the gold, had gone near to shattering the Treasurer's mental system altogether. But he was a strong man, and even in the early freshness of his misfortunes he began to make plans for the future.

'The gold is gone,' he decided. 'Ritchie will make for a South American port from which there is no extradition. In any case I could take no action, for the law of no country would recognise the

gold as mine. Ah, Therésa, I could bear even that frightful loss with cheerfulness if thou wert by my side ! How could the love of a cold Scot compete with that of the noble Alesano ? Thou hast gone to join him at some time and spot agreed upon. What treachery ! I stole the gold for thee, and now thou wilt enjoy it with thy lover and laugh—laugh—malediction ! As for me, the innocent deceived by false man and falser woman, I will return to my faithful Vincosta. I am still Prime Minister and Treasurer, and President of the National Bank. We will repudiate all our debts, public and private—how comforting is the recollection that I have not paid for the *Vigilante*—and we will begin a new life without debts and without credit. After marriage, dishonour ; after gold sovereigns, the silver peso. It is a dreadful descent, but I am still Treasurer, and a careful man. There is still, I thank Heaven, a plain living to be made even out of the Republic of Vincosta.'

BENNET COPPLESTONE.

## WOMEN AS LETTER-WRITERS.

'A LETTER behoves to tell about oneself,' writes Mrs. Carlyle to John Sterling, and she could certainly speak as one having authority. She hits the truth, for women at any rate. Good letters need not necessarily talk of their writers, but they must, consciously or unconsciously, tell about them; must, above all else, transmit their personality. And the means of transmission becomes almost as important as the matter in hand; it is one thing to have something to say and another to have the art of saying it; an art which must always be individual to the writer, and which, in a flash, conveys the essence of his subject in so intimate a manner that the reader feels like his confidant. It is an art hard to regulate by any general rules, except that of simplicity, especially in the case of letter-writing. The sweetest and most pensive of correspondents, Dorothy Osborne, said all there was to say about it as long ago as 1653.

'All letters, methinks, should be free and easy as one's discourse; not studied, as an oration, nor made up of hard words, like a charm. 'Tis an admirable thing to see how some people will labour to find out terms that may obscure plain sense, like a gentleman I know, who would never say "the weather grew cold," but that "winter began to salute us." I have no patience with such coxcombs, and cannot blame an old uncle of mine that threw the standish at his man's head, because he writ a letter for him where, instead of saying (as his master bid him) "that he would have writ himself, but he had the gout in his hand," he said that "the gout in his hand would not permit him to put pen to paper."

Dorothy Osborne herself here gives the best proof that not only simplicity, but also spontaneity is needed, if a letter is to be perfectly satisfactory—spontaneity, which is a matter of the heart as well as the head, and implies the invaluable possession of mental sympathies. The best letter-writers, indeed, give the impression of their correspondents' personality along with their own and vary, almost imperceptibly, with each of them. A brilliant critic of 'The Art of Letter-writing'<sup>1</sup> has recently told

<sup>1</sup> 'The Art of Letter-writing,' by H. W. Paul, *Nineteenth Century* for July 1898.

us that 'as a jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears, so a letter must depend upon the person to whom it is addressed.' Many of the persons thus addressed have been women, and in this way alone they have exercised a great influence on letter-writing—on the letter-writing of men. Letter-receiving has been a calling for them, and, skilled in the arts of evoking and provoking alike, they have become as good as a School for style, and an Academy of nimble wit.

But they have been far from playing only a passive part. Letter-writing seems, indeed, an art especially invented to suit the talents of women, and (since their defects are often their graces) even to suit their foibles. Women are not creators; they are interpreters, critics; their best qualities, sympathy and insight, are the essence of criticism; and good letter-writing *is* criticism—of life, of people, of art, as the case may be. The quick perceptions and elusive grace that are natural to women, their habit of producing and their gift for expressing themselves, their mastery of detail, their power of subtle suggestion and of intuition, their very inability to sustain thought, and therefore to become heavy, their faculty for intimacy which sums up all the rest—these are so many qualifications for the writing of letters, and of personal letters in particular.

Generally speaking, correspondence can be divided into two chief kinds—the letters written for one, and the letters written for more than one. The first are the intimate letters, often from people comparatively unknown; only existing to reveal individual character, and bringing with them a particular and penetrating charm, a sense of personal discovery. The second sort are written with an eye to an audience, whether it consist of posterity, of the public, or only of a coterie. They are literary achievements that belong to all the world, and we have no desire to appropriate them, no enjoyment of them as private property. They are not so much loved as admired, especially by men, and it is perhaps by men that they are best written.

The lovable, intimate letter, on the contrary, comes most naturally from a woman's pen, and, as often as not, the masculine mind thinks it trivial. But the foremost letter-writers of the world have contrived to combine both set form and personal distinction. Madame de Sévigné, of course, achieved this and, in herself, includes almost every sort of letter-writing. It is dull however to discuss the unquestionable, and to comment upon Madame de Sévigné's

position in this respect is as futile as comment upon Shakespeare's position as a dramatist.

If we come to the letters that aim at being literature, and to such women as have written them, we find any kind of classification impossible. Eloquent letters, political letters belong to this province, such as Madame Roland's heroic and persuasive epistles to the Girondins, which are necessarily written from a platform. But the great era of correspondence in France immediately preceded Madame Roland and the Revolution. It was the period of writing for a coterie—the most elaborate kind of writing; for nothing can be more self-conscious than sentences penned for the perusal of a group of critical intimates, whose opinion is vital to the writer. Not a note could be composed in certain circles without being read aloud to them, and this in the days when one lady alone sent 16,000 letters to one gentleman; when not only gentlemen wrote to ladies, but adoring ladies wrote to each other, once, sometimes twice in twenty-four hours, on topics as often as not impersonal. The queen of these brilliant but rather malicious Muses was Madame du Deffand, the most brilliant, the most malicious of them all. Her physical blindness seemed to endow her with an extra acuteness of mental vision, and her pen darts like lightning, withering wherever it passes. Byron himself could not be more bored or more unkind than Madame du Deffand, and she had none of the high spirits which often redeemed his sallies. In her day kindness was too often confounded with stupidity. She certainly fulfilled Mrs. Carlyle's injunction to letter-writers, and her letters may be cited as masterpieces of self-revelation. They are chiefly written to her friend the Duchesse de Choiseul to Voltaire, on whom she practised platonics; and to Horace Walpole, with whom, when she was seventy, she had an arduous flirtation. She demanded a heart from others, but did not care to possess one herself; she tried to replace it by a large and lucid mind, which wielded epigram like a sword and forced upon her a panoramic view of the evils of life, without any cloud effects to soften them down. Her letters seem made up of mind and decorum—sceptical decorum—and sound no higher note than an enthusiastic avoidance of discomfort.

Here, for instance, is her description of her day. She has 'torn herself out of bed that her *frisure*, begun the day before, may be completed.' Her 'poor head is overpowered by four heavy hands . . . her curling-irons resound in her ears.' An officer

and an archbishop are chattering to her; her headdress and panier are being prepared. Suddenly a voice from the next room announces that the King is passing on his way to Mass; it is church time. 'Allons!' she cries in her letter, 'quick, my head-gear, my muff, my fan, my prayer book! Ne scandalisons personne! My chair! My porters! One, two, three, off!'

Or if we want her philosophy, 'There is but one decision to make about the world,' she says: 'to let it be as it is; to laugh at it without pretending to reform it; and to abandon la Maréchale to her levity, her low instincts, and her inconsequences, without bothering one's head about her.'

'Elles sont comme il plaît à Dieu, comme elles vous viennent; et si vous avez de l'esprit, ce n'est pas votre faute,' says Madame du Deffand to a witty Abbé about his letters. She and her contemporaries often thought they were admiring spontaneity when they were carefully cultivating lightness, for the prevailing worship of mind made self-consciousness natural. Her seriousness—and she could be admirably serious—is so artistic that it seems simple, almost obvious, and one finds oneself wondering why such essential things have not been said before. The quality of unostentatious gravity is the distinction of French writers, and we sometimes find these ladies of last century having the most delicate literary discussions on paper.

It was the fashion of the times also (and Madame du Deffand was its leader) to write pages of analysis of one's friends' characters—and of one's own. Women are audaciously interested in themselves, and therefore audaciously personal, even in such deliberate epistles as these. They are also unabashed by detail, and can trifle to profound purpose. Certain letters, like thistledown, live only by virtue of their lightness, and skim over Time too quickly for him to lay hold on them. What man—what Horace Walpole even—would dare to confide to an audience such a tissue of gossamer scandal and delicate intuition as most of these letters represent? Yet in these airy nothings lies the secret of French genius—the Genius of Intercourse.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was more ambitious than Madame du Deffand. She did not confine her attention to a coterie, but wrote for posterity and rather rashly proclaimed that her letters would be read long after Madame de Sévigné's were forgotten. In other respects she reminds us of the blind

old Frenchwoman, especially in her power of epigram and Book of Ecclesiasticus wisdom. But she, at any rate, regarded her race with a cold kindness which made her take pains to help it ; her philosophy, too, was no mere shield against spiritual discomfort and showed some of the real Stoic's courage and austerity. Her letters reveal a curious mixture of later Rome and modern London ; they seem to be written by an Epicurean who is watching Christianity with approbation. If they are less amusing than Madame du Deffand's, they are also more solid and not so fatiguing to the spirit. But then, unlike that lady, she is never bored and is gifted with an endless curiosity, an endless interest in fact. Her flirtation by correspondence with Pope was probably as great a piece of vanity as that of Madame du Deffand with Horace Walpole ; but it was more abstract and better disciplined. In all her letters, but especially in those to him, she is mistress of classical description and a precision which is refreshing. The modern quality of humour, of seeing things through a personal atmosphere, was as unknown as it would have been repugnant to her. She never paints, she engraves ; and her best accounts are like intaglios, clear-cut and excellently designed. She is a scholar even in her frivolities, and there is the same nicety in her account of a rakish card-party as in her sober pictures of Oriental scenes.

She writes to Pope from Belgrade in 1717 :

'This place . . . perfectly answers the description of the Elysian Fields. I am in the middle of a wood consisting chiefly of fruit trees watered by a vast number of fountains . . . and divided into many shady walks upon short grass. . . . The village is only inhabited by the richest among the Christians, who meet every night at a fountain, forty paces from my house, to sing and dance. But what persuades me more fully of my decease is the situation of my own mind, the profound ignorance I am in of what passes among the living (which only comes to me by chance), and the great calmness with which I receive it. Yet I have still a hankering after my friends and acquaintances left in the world. . . . And 'tis very necessary to make a perfect Elysium that there should be a River Lethe, which I am not so happy as to find. The reflection on the great gulf between you and me cools all news that comes hither. I can neither be sensibly touched with joy or grief when I consider that possibly the cause of either is removed before the letter comes to my hands.'

This is admirable of the academic kind, the charm of which lies in the absence of strong contrasts. Lady Mary never sinks below cheerfulness, or gets beyond the 'sprightly folly' she 'thanks God she was born with.' Perhaps the art of aphorism suits her best of all.

'Our proverb that knowledge is no burden may be true as to oneself,' she writes, 'but knowing too much is apt to make one troublesome to other people.'

Or, 'We are little better than straws upon the water; we may flatter ourselves that we swim, when the current carries us along.'

'Does not King David say somewhere that man walketh in a vain show?' she writes on another occasion; 'I think he does, and I am sure this is peculiarly true of the Frenchman; but he walks merrily and seems to enjoy the vision, and may he not therefore be esteemed more happy than many of our solid thinkers, whose brows are furrowed by deep reflection, and whose wisdom is so often clothed with a rusty mantle of spleen and vapours?'

If Lady Mary was born scholarly and classical, Dorothy Osborne, her predecessor by sixty years, was born classical and natural. The daughter of a Cavalier and plighted to a Round-head's son, she has about her style a kind of sober grace which seems to express her relation to both parties. Besides, she lived within hail of the Elizabethans, and her words 'have the dew still upon them.' She is a dainty preacher, and nurses wisdom with a kind of maternal tenderness; the thoughts that she sends forth from the lonely Bedfordshire home—where she tends a sick father and pacifies a quarrelsome brother—are scented with lavender. There can be no more pleasant contrast than that between Lady Mary's Ottoman Elysium and Dorothy Osborne's English Arcadia.

'About six or seven o'clock,' she writes, 'I walk out into a common that lies hard by the house, where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads. I talk to them, and find they want nothing to make them the happiest people in the world but the knowledge that they are so. Most commonly, when we are in the midst of our discourse, one looks about her and spies her cows going into the corn, and then away they all run, as if they had wings at their heels.'

But Dorothy Osborne really belongs to the intimate letter-

writers, and wrote for one eye alone—that of her betrothed, Sir William Temple. Her letters, properly speaking, form part of the most personal of all provinces—that of love-letters and letters of sentiment; but she writes as a wife rather than as a lover, and this is as well for the reader. *Egoïsme à deux* is as unallowable and as tedious in correspondence as it is in society, and the most charming letters are those that introduce us to a hospitable and friendly circle. Dorothy Osborne was at once too modest and too observant to be guilty of egoism. She liked to know many people of different kinds, and described, or rather suggested them with a pretty humour of her own. Her mind has an English climate, and though her pages are rich in tender expressions of love, they still keep the temperate sweetness of an English landscape. She reminds us of one of Shakespeare's gentler heroines, in whom devotion and fidelity take the place of passion, and playfulness that of spirits. 'Tis not that I am sad,' she says, 'I thank God I have no occasion to be so, but I never appear to be very merry, and if I had all I could wish for in the world I do not think it would make any visible change in my humour.'

If we want a more fervid feeling we must go to France in the last century; the letters of Madame d'Epinay, for instance, are a *Journal of Sensibility*, though not of Despair. We shall find that quality in the letters of Héloïse to Abélard—in 1131—terrible and beautiful in their concentration; or if we seek chronicles less remote, there are the correspondences of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, once Madame du Deffand's 'companion,' or of Madame Desbordes Valmore in our own day. Letters of passion should never be collected in a volume, and not more than two or three from the same person should be read, for passion is naturally monotonous. The death song of the swan is a beautiful thing, but when he goes on singing *ad infinitum* without dying, it becomes tiresome. The right medium for the expression of passion is poetry, which arrests thought and feeling at white heat and crystallises it, compelling it to brevity. Madame Desbordes Valmore's love poems, for example, are much finer interpretations of love than her letters on the same theme, which are so intense as to become oppressive.

As far as style goes, the love letters of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse to M. Guibert may be taken as a model of eloquence and of fiery grace. She is in turns reckless and restrained, and there

is something splendid—something of the grand manner—in the way she risks herself, in her prodigal and daring simplicity. ‘*Cette âme de feu et de douleur, c'est votre création*,’ she writes to her lover; ‘*l'esprit trouve des mots, l'âme aurait besoin de trouver une langue nouvelle*.’ But with the best will in the world one is wearied by these pages of egoism—*égoïsme à une*, in this case—and it is difficult to sympathise with a woman who kept a pair of passions; who was broken-hearted about her first love (then dying of consumption) when she adopted her second, to whom all these letters (one hundred and eighty in two years) were addressed.

There is another kind of personal confession—often as self-centred as the love letter, but deeper and of far wider interest—the letter of religious experience. It is dangerous to remove the spiritual from the realms of the imagination to those of colloquial prose and colloquial imagery, where materialism too often overtakes it, as evangelical correspondences abundantly testify. It would perhaps be better if religious letters also could be turned into poetry, or at least written by poets. Eugénie de Guérin, whose poems deserve to be better known, has given us letters which fulfil this condition, and show us how graceful, how hospitable religion can be—pages rich in spiritual delicacy, and therefore impossible to quote from without injuring them. It is equally difficult to cite the correspondence of Madame Guyon, the reactionary saint of Louis XIV.’s reign, not because it is too subtle, but because it is too rhapsodical. It is full of startling effects, for she was a mystic of intense inward vision, and therefore a Realist about the Unreal, and over-familiar with the Invisible.

Madame Swetchine and Caroline Fox should hardly be reckoned amongst religious letter-writers, although they wrote religiously. Both lived on the borderland of religion, but their atmosphere is more intellectual than that of the religious world, and their intellect was foremost in the search after truth. The writer really representing this sort of metaphysical correspondence is Sara Coleridge, who inherited her father’s voracity for abstraction even in doctrine. Her letters should hardly be called letters—they are treatises; far from falling into Madame Guyon’s error, they make even the visible invisible and obscure it by a fog of speculation.

The history of letter-writing would make an interesting

volume; like the history of comedy it is practically that of society, and a good letter is an epitome of civilisation. The letter of feeling, whether of passion or religion, is the most primitive expression of the art, as Abélard and Héloïse testify; and it is only as family life grows and expands into social life that amusing letters become possible. The Paston letters in Caxton's time are the first, and there are others that date from Elizabethan days and abound in Elizabethan grace; but their interest is mostly historical, and they do little to disclose character. The personal letter can only come later, when personality has room to develop and culture has affected women as well as men. Nearly all the letter-writing of women is due to the last hundred and fifty years, and during that period they have written every kind of letter, excepting that of whims and crotchets, for which their minds are perhaps too constant; a Charles Lamb, an Edward FitzGerald has never yet been translated into the feminine. The most difficult letter to write, and the one generally best unwritten, is certainly the letter on Nature. The Lake school, including Dorothy Wordsworth, were alone adequate to it. Since their time one or two others have partially succeeded, but on the whole who would not exclaim with Mrs. Carlyle: 'Oh, my dear! if "all about feelings" be bad in a letter, all about scenery and no feelings is a deal worse!'

'Such a letter,' she goes on, 'as I received from you yesterday, after much half anxious, half angry waiting for, will read charmingly in your biography, and may be quoted in Murray's "Guide Book"; but for "me, as one solitary individual," I was not charmed with it at all.'

Mrs. Carlyle, at any rate, could not have existed in any century but her own, any more than the sort of *human* letter which she creates for us. She inverts Jeffrey's advice to young writers—'If you think you have a good thing to say don't say it'—for she never thinks she has a good thing to say and always says it. More almost than any woman letter-writer she has humour, the most personal of all qualities and the most modern, for it grows with our taste for character study and our sense of life's incongruities. Too many things have already been said about humour and its relation to wit, but thus much may, perhaps, be hazarded here: humour is an atmosphere of the mind, humour is colour; wit is form; humour has to do with the character, wit with the head. Madame du Deffand and Lady

Mary wrote letters essentially witty; Mrs. Carlyle does not so often condense her humour into wit; but she can do so whenever she wishes. She writes on one occasion that she is not up to visitors, not even to '*an angel aware*,' like G., and one might quote a dozen more of her racy phrases. Humorous description, however, is what she enjoys, and the peculiar flavour of her humour is that it attaches itself mostly to the limitations of existence and to minute domestic drawbacks. 'She is not what is called a thorough servant,' she says of one of her many 'generals,' 'but that will be no objection to signify, as I am not a thorough lady, which Grace Macdonald defined to be "one who had not entered her own kitchen for seven years."

Nothing can be more succinct than her humour, and yet no letters seem more haphazard—it is one of their chief charms. The fact is she was a great artist in her own way, and her power of selection was instinctive: a much more finished production than when it is artificial. She was quite as good a housekeeper of her wits as of her home. 'It is not only a faculty with me,' she says, 'but a necessity of my nature to make a great deal out of nothing.' Her thrift is like that of the bee; she darts into the centre of each subject she touches, and returns with its honey packed into the smallest possible space. She can be bold too, and vivid in a large way when she attempts large subjects, as, for instance, in her description of Father Mathew's Temperance Meeting in the East End; and, like most humourists, she can be sentimental—none more so.

'Blessed be the inventor of photography!' she writes; 'I set him above even the inventor of chloroform. It has given more positive pleasure to poor suffering humanity than anything that has "cast up" in my time, or is like to, this art by which even the "poor" can possess themselves of tolerable likenesses of their absent dear ones. And mustn't it be acting favourably on the morality of the country? I assure you I have often gone into my own room in the devil's own humour—ready to swear at "things in general" and some things in particular—and my eyes resting by chance on one of my photographs of long-ago places or people, a crowd of sad gentle thoughts has rushed into my heart, and driven the devil out, as clean as ever so much holy water and priestly exorcisms could have done.'

Here, as elsewhere, Mrs. Carlyle just falls short of the poetic; the sense of poetry was the one mental equipment she did not

possess, and if she had possessed it she would oftener have been able to look beyond the moment. 'You are the most concrete woman I have ever known, Jane,' a friend once said to her; and 'concrete,' not 'matter of fact,' is the word which expresses her.

The same epithet might, with equal justice, be applied to another letter-writer and another 'Jane'—Jane Austen. In some ways she may be compared to Mrs. Carlyle. Her mind also enjoys playing upon the limitations and inconveniences of daily existence with sustained vivacity. But in her case, form, neatness, and occasionally wit are more prominent than humorous description. She has not so rich a nature as Mrs. Carlyle, and needed her own creations to bring out her full brilliance. Her letters are sprightly but rather cold chronicles of family plans, illnesses, meals, acquaintances—here and there enriched by flashes of fun and epigram and by the almost imperceptible threads of her cobweb malice, in which she caught so many buzzing flies. She is perfect in the art of implication, and nobody can *imply* a bore as mercilessly as she does.

'A widower with three children,' she writes, 'has no right to look higher than his daughter's governess; ' 'I am forced to be abusive for want of subject, having really nothing to say.' Here are a few of her nothings:—

'Charles Powlett has been very ill, but is getting well again. His wife is discovered to be everything that the neighbourhood could wish for, silly and cross as well as extravagant.'

' . . . At the bottom of the Kingsdown Hill we met a gentleman in a buggy who, on minute examination, turned out to be Dr. Hall, in such very deep mourning that either his mother, his wife, or himself must be dead.'

'We had a Miss North and a Mr. Gould of our party; the latter walked home with me after tea. He is a very young man, just entered Oxford, wears spectacles, and has heard that "Evelina" was written by Dr. Johnson.'

Miss Austen seldom shows her sweeter side in her letters, but when she does her sweetness has a brilliance which gives it a charming distinction. Most of them are written to her beloved sister Cassandra, during their yearly separations. If they are sometimes monotonous in their detail, they certainly have the virtue of absolute spontaneity. Nobody could detect a genius in them, still less the genius of the family. There are few letters from famous women of which this can be said. Those of Charlotte

Brontë and Mrs. Browning are indeed equally unconscious; but Miss Brontë's letters are more characteristic of the whole woman than Miss Austen's—of her passion and her austerity—while in Mrs. Browning's we are aware of the poet, beside the lovable companion.

There is a very different sort of letter written by the great—more edifying and less intimate—which, for want of a better term, may be called the Sibylline letter. Madame de Staël was probably its first parent, but she is too much of a Muse to be reckoned with, and George Sand is the High Priestess who has given us the best of such oracles—a High Priestess rich in human love for human correspondents. Beautiful thoughts on Life and Death and Immortality, tender wisdom, eloquent political outbursts and pleadings for freedom—such is the poetry in prose which makes up her correspondence. It is unsatisfactory to give fragments of it, and her letters should be read as wholes. The same cannot be said of George Eliot's correspondence, for she is a Sibyl too deeply versed in German philosophy, too much weighed down by the responsibilities of utterance to make a letter-writer. It is often the Minor Prophetesses who have the finer turn for expression—Fanny Kemble, for instance, whose letters frequently have the Delphic ring. But they are always natural, always abundant, and enrich us with the wealth of her varied experience.

There is one large region of letter-writing which remains to be touched on, a region which lies between the unconscious intimate letter and the conscious literary one, and partakes of both; this is the world of social letters, and social letters are identical with the graceful correspondence of the eighteenth century in England. It was the only time when our reserved island could boast of an outburst of letter-writing. French influence, French expression, and travels in France were then the fashion, and no doubt intercourse with our neighbours schooled our taste and taught us to formulate more readily. The practice of letter-writing was almost as universal as in Madame du Deffand's France, and much less self-conscious than in her circles. Like their French contemporaries too, these English letters are typical rather than individual. If one had to express them by one comprehensive epithet, one would choose the word 'sprightly.' 'Sprightly' often rises to 'brilliant,' and that not only in the best hands. The great Hannah More, Miss Burney, and Mrs. Piozzi amaze us by the vitality of their pens; but many of the less known ladies, Maria Holroyd and

Mrs. Boscowen in particular, are not far behind, and there does not seem to be one of them who was guilty of a dull page. They always write letters 'of the news sort,' never of 'the inner-woman sort'—purely external chronicles of external things described with animation and intelligence.

Most of the charmers of that time knew the same people and had the same tastes as well as the same style, so that it is often hard for the reader to tell one from another. Beside the Drums and Routs, the quizzings and scandals, and all the gay bustle which go on in their correspondence, it is also full of the fashionable curiosity about travellers, and remote facts from foreign lands. 'Miss Harris, I hope,' writes one lady, 'will tell you next winter how she skaited (*sic*) through the northern climate almost to every Court over frozen seas.' Miss Harris and her 'skaiting' were doubtless discussed in twenty drawing-rooms, over twenty cups of bohea. Those were elegant days, when the object of life was 'to be entertained,' and even Captain Cooke and his savages were described elegantly; days so elegant, indeed, that we find one of Hannah More's feminine correspondents anxious to address her as Hercules, but refraining on the score of delicacy.

All these writers belonged to distinguished circles, and the real value of their letters lies in their familiar pictures of great men and of great events. Their pages are pages of history, and as such they should be read. The presentation of some striking scene shows them, perhaps, at their best; such, for example, as the trial of Warren Hastings, which Hannah More witnessed.

'Poor Hastings,' she wrote, 'sitting and looking so meek, to hear himself called "villain" and "cut-throat" . . . The orator (Edmund Burke) was seized with a spasm . . . and I did not know whether he might not have died in the exertion of his powers, like Chatham.'

Mrs. More's correspondence is not nearly so well known as Miss Burney's, and yet, though its writer is not so attractive, it is quite as sparkling and representative. No one had better matter for her letters. Until her conversion in early middle age, she led a life as brilliant as it was possible for a Sabbatarian to lead; and a great deal of brilliance can be put into six days out of seven. She spent several months of each year with the Garricks—who adored her—met everybody of interest, and spent her nights, as she tells us, 'raking it' in a hackney coach with Dr. Johnson, or hearing him talk at Sir Joshua's. She was a thorough blue-

stocking and much enjoyed stately *bardinage* with Bishops, or Gothic compliments from periwigged divines.

Blow, blow, my sweetest rose,  
For Hannah More will soon be here !

So writes the learned Dr. Langhorne to her, and her letters to him are as liturgically flirtatious as he could desire. Her correspondence does not show much change even after her conversion, for she was one of those fortunate people who can regard their social position as a Means of Grace, and the more she used it the holier she felt. When a couple of illustrious Turks came to visit her, she writes, they sat down on the carpet and tried to convert her to the Koran, in return for which attention she pressed White's Sermons upon them. It is true she had some passing qualms about Horace Walpole's free-thought, but she continued her witty budgets to him on the chance of their effecting his reform—unlike her French rival, who would have written for the opposite purpose. The sincere Evangelicalism of this busy and popular Pharisee makes her letters rather distincter, perhaps also more amusing than those of her amiable compeers; and her copious sheets to her courtiers, who were often of her own sex, can be safely recommended as excellent company for a solitary evening by the fire.

The publication of family correspondences has lately come into vogue, and it is to be hoped it may continue. We have had the private letters of the Verney family, and also those of the Newdegate ladies, first in the time of Elizabeth, then in the time of the Georges.<sup>1</sup> These simple communications from unknown people make quite as valuable a chapter in social history as the letters of celebrities; more so, perhaps, because they are not brilliant and only give us a picture of comfortable average people. Public spirit is a rare and may be a conceited quality; as a motive for correspondence it is, at any rate, impossible. But how charming would it be if, for any motive whatever, more members of more families would write full chronicles of their doings—and if other members would keep them ! The clothes, the walks, the jam-making—even the jam-eating—of a hundred years ago are vitally interesting. It requires, of course, much greater self-suppression to figure namelessly as one of many correspondents than to write a novel—the unfailing vent for every young lady with a pen. But then there is this compen-

<sup>1</sup> *Gossip from a Muniment Room* and *The Cheverels of Cheverel Mazar*, both edited by Lady Newdegate.

sation: a letter is bound to give pleasure at least to one, but there is no such certainty about a novel.

The qualities too which mar a book may often make a letter; and letter-writing is the legitimate channel for immediate expression, of which women feel so much greater a need than men. Then it is a craft which is peculiarly adapted to a woman's avocations and the life of little interruptions which usually falls to her lot. There is no solemn thread of Fate to spin when we take up our correspondence—no thread, indeed, that we may not comfortably lose, and find again half an hour later. Letter-writing has another advantage: it fulfils the first condition of any feminine occupation; it includes men and admits of all the finer shades of their relations to women. It is an interesting question whether women write best to men or to women, and one which either sex will probably settle differently. It is evident enough that men write best to women, for women alone have power to draw out their tenderer side—to make them most themselves. But, excepting in love-letters, it is just this side which disappears when women write to men; chameleon-like, they try to write from the brain, to condense more, to become less personal, and consequently least themselves. Such letters are more artistic than those they send to each other, but they have not the frankness and vitality that these possess. Lady Mary is nicer when she writes to her sister or daughter than when she writes to Pope; and Mrs. Carlyle reveals herself more vividly in her letters to her Scottish women friends than in those to Sterling and to Forster.

However that may be, a paper such as this can have but one ending, a plea for the Employment of the Pen. Everybody knows the reasons against it. There is no School of Art where we can all learn it and take ourselves seriously; there is no leisure; and there *are* newspapers, railway trains, high pressure—those often-quoted lions in the way. But, after all, there is a constant demand for the revival of other and less useful crafts—hand-looms, lace-making, and the like. Why not then for that of letter-writing, which cannot fail, as these do, because of insufficient funds? There is no real reason why the women of to-day should not produce as good letters as their great-grandmothers, and every reason why they should. And if they have grown too far-seeing to write for the moment and need a nobler purpose, let them write for the poor unamused 'unborn generations' who will have nothing but post-cards to divert them.

EDITH SICHEL.

## A ROYAL ROMANCE.

As old King George the Second was taking the air in Kensington Gardens one fine summer morning in the middle of last century, a little girl of some five years, who was walking with her sisters and the Swiss nurse, broke away from the party, skipped up to the King, dropped a curtsey, and greeted him with the remark, ‘*Comment vous portez-vous, M. le roi? Vous avez ici une grande et belle maison, n'est-ce pas?*’ The old King, familiar and perhaps bored with the pomp and etiquette of his usual relations with his subjects, was pleased beyond measure at the originality of this introduction. He took notice of the child, often had her to visit him at the Palace afterwards, even romped with her, and put her in a large china jar, where, instead of showing fright, she sang *Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre* at him from under the lid. The little lady was Lady Sarah Lennox; and as daughter of the Duke of Richmond, a great officer of the Court, she and her sisters had the privilege of being in the gardens to see the royal promenade. It was the prettiest entrance imaginable to the great world where this young lady was destined for a time to play a great part. Ten or a dozen years later all fashionable London was agog with excitement, wrote letters, reported every movement and every rumour of Lady Sarah, for it was the question of 1761 whether she was or was not to become Queen of England.

Any one who reads much in the annals of the picturesque eighteenth century cannot fail to be struck with the smallness of the English society which controlled matters in those days. You may take the account of their times by any of the recording angels of that period—from Hervey, who sneered at most of what he saw at the Court of George the Second; to Wraxall, who expiated some of his false entries in the King’s Bench—and find that the doings of a few dozen well-born families provided them all with the bulk of their diverting gossip. It was essentially the age of a few great names. A Walpole, a Pulteney, a Pelham perhaps, two Pitts, and two Foxes were the great figures in politics during the reigns of three Georges. The members and connections of a few other great families rang the changes for a century on all the public offices and fat sinecures—from the

Court to the Custom House. The army and the navy were officered from the same class, and it was only in the higher walks of the law that the outsider got a chance. Even the law came to be the happy hunting-ground of a few energetic Scotsmen like Murray and Wedderburn and Erskine, who got most of its prizes. Fashionable and official England, in fact, was a small coterie, whose members were known to each other personally, and were connected by ties of marriage or relationship or interest, which bound the whole body into a compact homogeneous mass. The men were to be found within the limits of two or three clubs—White's almost alone during the early part of the century, and with Almack's or Brooks's, and perhaps Boodle's, during the second half. The wives and daughters of these men were the great ladies of society, who lived and died in a few great country houses and a few great town mansions, danced and flirted at Ranelagh and Vauxhall, and went to Court when they were young, and to Bath when age and rheumatism overtook them. Half a dozen great portrait painters, with Reynolds and Gainsborough and Romney at their head, painted the England of last century—or, at any rate, the ruling part of it.

The family of which the little lady whose youth we recall was the youngest daughter but one was of the very pick of this restricted society. Her father, the second Duke of Richmond, a seigneur of the very highest *ton*, stood close to royalty itself. Whenever the King went over to Hanover, either to make love to his numerous lady friends in that kingdom, or to fight valiantly, and shake his fist in the enemy's face, as he did at Dettingen, the Crown was put in commission, of which the duke was a member. His duchess was a Cadogan, and his own high rank and the promise and abilities of his son made the family of Lennox one of the very highest consideration in the kingdom.

There was another family which by its energy and ability had established itself firmly in the small world of which we write. From the time that old Sir Stephen Fox, a strange compound of integrity and suppleness, founded the family fortunes at the Court of Charles the Second, until the genius of the race burnt out with the life of Charles James Fox in 1806, one or other of the Foxes had contrived to keep himself before the very face and eyes of the country. The representative of the family at the time we are recalling was the son of the second marriage and of the old age of Sir Stephen, Henry—or, as he was known at White's

and the House of Commons, Harry—Fox. A year or two before little Lady Sarah was born, the Lennox and Fox families had become allied by marriage. The Lennoxes supplied the breeding, and the Foxes the abilities, which appeared in such splendour in the person of Charles James Fox in the next generation. We know so much now, but the marriage at the time was considered a *mésalliance* of the most heartless and hopeless kind.

It was in 1744 that Harry Fox—a prominent man in the debates, it is true, and a brother of Lord Ilchester, but still a younger son—dared to run away and conclude a secret marriage with Lady Georgina Caroline, eldest daughter of the Duke of Richmond. It was a marriage of defiance. The duke and duchess knew of the attachment, and had provided another match for the young lady. The young lady, with much spirit, shaved off her eyebrows to make herself unpresentable to the newswain. Mr. Fox pressed his suit all the harder, got a special licence, and prevailed upon the young lady to accompany him to the house of his friend Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, and fashionable and official London was convulsed when news of the match came out.

Fashionable and official London was mostly at the opera on the evening of May 4, 1744, when the blow fell. Amongst others, Sir Charles was there, and he wrote and told Harry all about it next day. ‘From the box where I was,’ he wrote, ‘I saw the news of your match run along the front boxes exactly like fire in a train of gunpowder.’

It must have been pretty to see. Instead of listening to the dulcet tones of the Frasi who was warbling at the footlights to an accompaniment of ogling from the youth of White’s in the stage boxes, the ladies leant round the partitions of the front row, and passed the news behind their fans: ‘The rage of the duke and his duchess was very high,’ they whispered. ‘They had put off the great ball fixed for the morrow, and had gone off to Goodwood.’ His grace had written to Mr. Pelham, the Secretary of State, that Miss Pelham and Lady Lucy Clinton must not visit the offending couple.

The house at once resolved itself into two factions, and dear pleasant young Mr. Horace Walpole, who was thoroughly at home in such a matter, hearing of the ducal ban on all visitors to the daughter, went straightway to Williams’s box, and begged to know the earliest moment that he might be allowed to pay his respects to that lady.

Never was such a hubbub in town. They discussed the match at tea-tables and in drawing-rooms, and the story of the loves of Henry and Caroline was the one subject of conversation and dispute. All London wrote to the duke and duchess with condolences 'at ye unhappy affair' and with assurances of its own innocence of all participation in the plot, and mostly with indifferent success. Mr. Pelham wrote; Lord Ilchester, Harry's own brother, wrote; Lord Lincoln wrote an almost tearful letter. The Duke of Marlborough, who gave the bride away, was much blamed; and Williams, who provided the house and the parson, was held up to execration. The Dukes of Grafton and Devonshire had a warm dispute at White's about it, 'the former a-tearing the whole to pieces, the latter defending it.' The pother even spread to the Palace, where 'Blood Royal had the greatest weight' against Harry Fox and his bride.

Some of the cooler heads refused to take the matter so seriously. There was bluff old Sir Robert Walpole, now Lord Orford, who 'couldn't understand that the nation was undone because Lady Caroline Lennox was married to Mr. Fox.' Lord Carteret, too—the clever, cynical Carteret, about whom one imagines so much, and knows so little—'diverted himself with it.' No wonder! He was walking through the ante-room at Kensington Palace, and saw the Duke of Newcastle and the Duke of Dorset in conference with prodigiously long faces. They called him to them, said they were talking about a most unfortunate affair, and that they should make no secret to him that they were greatly affected by it. 'Upon this,' says Carteret, 'I thought our fleet or our armies were lost, or Mons betrayed into the hands of the French, and at last it came out that Harry Fox was married, which I knew before.' Here, in the King's Palace, were his Secretary of State and his President of the Council shaking their heads over this wonderful marriage, instead of attending to the business of the nation. It is not surprising to hear that the King was 'violently angry.'

We recall so much of Mr. Fox's family history because, as we shall see, he and Lady Caroline stood almost in the relation of parents to the young lady who is the subject of this paper, when her own were removed by death a few years later. Mr. Fox, too, made great use of his experience in what was held at the time to be a most irregular and romantic affair when a much more irregular and romantic alliance was the burning question of 1761. Meanwhile it is pleasant to read that he and his wife were forgiven

by the offended duke and duchess. The occasion was the birth of Henry Fox's firstborn, Stephen ; and the pardon was conveyed in as quaint and touching a letter as was ever written. 'Wee long to see your dear innocent Child,' wrote the duke and duchess, 'and that has not a little contributed to our present tenderness for you.' So the offending pair were received back into favour, and the alliance of the Foxes and the Lennoxes was at last acknowledged and confirmed.

It must have been very shortly after we saw little Lady Sarah present herself to George the Second in the garden that she was left an orphan by the death of her mother the duchess. There was a family council in 1751, no doubt, where it was decided that she and her little sister Cecilia should live out their childhood with their married sister, Lady Kildare, in Ireland. So they and their nurses and their dolls were packed off by the coach, and made the long journey by the old road to Chester and Holyhead, perhaps returning with my lady to Carton after the season of 1751. For eight years, at Carton, Lady Sarah breathed the soft air of the Kildare plains, and perhaps acquired the wondrous beauty of complexion which was one of her charms when she came back to London a tall girl of fourteen—the lustrous beauty of skin which you may see in the faces of the women and children on those same plains to-day.

In 1758 Lady Sarah returned to London and to society, and to the care of Harry Fox and his wife at Holland House—as we say, a tall, beautiful, shy girl of fourteen. George the Second was nearing the end of his tether, but, possessed of a taste for a pretty face to the last, heard of the new young beauty, and expressed a wish to see her. He remembered the little girl of the gardens and the china jar, no doubt. So the tall shy girl is carried to the Palace, and approaches the Presence—the Presence surrounded by its Court and accompanied by its grandson, the Prince of Wales, a young man of a ruddy countenance and straightforward manners, with a receding forehead but a monstrously firm jaw, both features indexes of some of the events which were destined to stand out in his long reign of sixty years. But poor Lady Sarah has lost all her early confidence in the presence of royalty ; she stammers and blushes when his majesty condescends to joke and poke fun at her ; his majesty is disappointed and says, 'Pooh ! she's grown quite stupid,' and goes back to his whist with the Walmoden who pulls the chair from under him, and amuses him generally in a way he can understand. But the young Prince of Wales, like the rest of

the town, is struck with the beauty of the blushing girl ; and, free for a moment from the tutelage of his mother, the Dowager Princess, and his groom of the stole, my Lord Bute, falls headlong in love with Lady Sarah.

The time was ripe for the appearance of another beauty. The incomparable Gunnings were just married, and the eldest, poor Maria, was dying of consumption at Croome. The young girl from Kildare succeeded these paragons and stepped into their place by common consent of the town. Mr. Reynolds painted her twice : first at the window of Holland House with a dove, with her cousin Lady Sue Strangways, and her nephew Mr. Charles James Fox, coming round the corner below. Later he painted her in the classic manner, sacrificing to the Graces. Both pictures are attractive enough, but for once we feel that Mr. Reynolds allowed the true beauty of his subject to escape him.

Of that beauty there can be no doubt. 'Her beauty is not easily described,' says Harry Fox, 'otherwise than by saying she had the finest Complexion most beautiful Hair and prettiest Person that ever was seen, with a sprightly and fine Air, a pretty Mouth and remarkably fine Teeth and excess of Bloom in her Cheeks, little Eyes, but this is not describing Her, for Her great Beauty was a peculiarity of Countenance, and made Her at the same time different from and prettier than any other Girl I ever saw.' Fox may be thought partial to his sister-in-law, but Horace Walpole certainly was not. Yet Horace was thrown off his guard by the beauty of Lady Sarah. They played 'Jane Shore' at Holland House, Lady Sarah in the title part, and Mr. Charles Fox and Lady Sue Strangways, and Charles's little brother Harry dressed up as a bishop. 'Lady Sarah was in white,' wrote Horace, 'with her hair about her ears and on the ground, and no Magdalen by Correggio was half so lovely and expressive.'

The town was in raptures, in fact, and all the young men were making sheep's eyes at the beauty of sixteen. There was my Lord Carlisle ; my Lord Errol, whom she refused ; my Lord Newbottle, with whom she flirted desperately ; Mr. Thomas Bunbury, whom she afterwards married ; and no doubt a score of others whose names are not recorded. Last of all there was the Prince of Wales, now become George the Third of England, who was a willing victim. He saw Lady Sarah often. There was no flirtation here ; the King was in deadly earnest. There was no stupid Royal Marriage Act in force ; this the King, perhaps in the light of

his own experience, thoughtfully provided for his relations when they began to marry into Horry Walpole's family. But at present, as we say, the King knew his own mind; and there is no doubt that, if Lady Sarah had known hers, she might have ascended the throne in 1761 as Queen of Great Britain and Ireland.

Horace Walpole accused Henry Fox of intriguing to bring the match about, and the remark is a proof of Horace's sagacity. Harry Fox was not loth to see his sister-in-law Queen of England, we may be sure. Mr. Fox was the obedient, humble servant of the Court at any time, and when, two years later, the Court wanted some instrument to bring about the peace with France, they employed Mr. Fox, who did the business by means of a bribery which made that age, not at all nice in such matters, stare and gasp with wonder, or at least that portion of it which got none of the money.

Lady Sarah was often at Court, and the King's flame burnt brighter every day. There were soft passages in the windows of the Palace, and the King at least grew conspicuously amorous. But George, one imagines, was a clumsy lover—of the blundering, downright type. He talked so quickly that his words overran each other, spluttered a good deal, and poked his face very close to the person he was addressing. He may have frightened the young girl; there was certainly little response on her part.

Harry Fox was so interested in the progress of the affair that he left a detailed account among his papers of what we may consider its central incident. 'On Thursday,' says he, 'Lady Susan [Strangways] was at Court with Ly Albemarle, Lady Sarah on the other side of the room with Ly Car. Fox.' The young King went up to Lady Sue and asked her when she would return to town from Somersetshire, where he heard she was going. "'Not before Winter Sir," said Lady Sue.

"Would you like to see a Coronation?"

"Yes Sir, I hope I should come to see that."

"Won't it be a much finer sight when there is a Queen?"

"To be sure Sir."

"I've had a great many applications from abroad, but I don't like them," added his majesty, "I have had none at home, I should like that better."

Lady Sue was frightened, and said nothing, records Mr. Fox.

"What do you think of your friend, you know who I mean. Don't you think her fittest?"

"Think Sir?" said the frightened girl.

"I think none so fitt," says the King.'

He then went across the room to Lady Sarah, bade her ask her friend what he had been saying, and make her tell all. She assured him that she would.

'H.M. is not given to joke,' comments Mr. Fox, 'and this would be a very bad joke too. Is it serious? Strange if it is, and a strange way of going about it.'

'The next Sunday sennight,' continues Mr. Fox, 'Lady Sarah go's to Court, out of humour and had been crying all the morning.' The fact is the poor girl was bewildered. The fascinating Newbottle, with whom she was flirting desperately, was too much in her mind to allow her to think of the greater matter which was in suspense.

'The moment the king saw her,' says Mr. Fox, 'he go's to her.

"Have you seen your friend lately?" said he.

"Yes Sir."

"Has she told you what I said to her?"

"Yes Sir."

"What do you think of it? tell me, for my happiness depends upon it."

"Nothing Sir."

Upon which his majesty turned upon his heel and exclaimed pettishly, "Nothing comes of nothing," and left the room.

Shortly afterwards Lady Sarah went into Somersetshire, rode out, fell with her horse, and fractured her leg. The faithless Newbottle made some unfeeling remark when told of the accident, the faithful King was all solicitude for the suffering young beauty. He asked Conolly a hundred questions about her, and Mr. Fox was ready to reply to a hundred more. There had been a rumour that the King was about to marry a princess of Brunswick, and on a Sunday Mr. Fox satisfied himself that the rumour was without foundation. 'On Monday therefore I went to Court,' he wrote in a memorandum addressed 'to all whom it may concern.' He determined, he said, that the King should speak to him about 'Lady Sal,' if he could bring it about. After 'a few loose questions' the King supposed Fox by that time settled at Holland House. 'Now I have you,' said Mr. Fox to himself, and replied to the King, 'I never go there, sir; there is nobody there.'

'Where then is Lady Caroline?'

'In Somersetshire Sir with Lady Sarah.'

At the mention of the name the King's manner and countenance softened, we are told, and he coloured a little. Fox went on to describe the accident—the fall on the stony road, the horse

struggling for a moment to get up, his shoulder grinding Lady Sarah's leg against the stones, the terrible pain in the coach before she got to Mr. Hoare's the surgeon. 'The king drew up his breath, wreathed himself, and made the countenance of one feeling pain'; and Mr. Fox says to himself, 'Thinks I you shall hear of that again.' So he went on to say that she was 'clearfull now and patient and good humoured to a degree,' and so on, but worked back to the accident again with richer details than ever, and the King again sucked in his breath and changed countenance when Henry mentioned the great pain.

'Don't tell Lady Sarah,' he wrote to his wife, 'that I am sure that he intends to marry her, for I am not sure of it but I am sure that he loves her better than N[ewbottle] does.' Wisdom was surely justified of her child when this paper appeared in Princess Lichtenstein's book to vindicate Mr. Walpole's remark that Harry Fox was intriguing to make his sister-in-law Queen of England. One is inclined therefore to believe Horace when he declares that, when Lady Sarah had recovered and come back to London, she watched for the King as he rode in from Kew—made hay at him, in fact, in the grounds of Holland House 'in a fancied habit.' It may be; who shall blame her? The account of the King's solicitude lost none of its beauty in Fox's telling, we may be sure; and *l'affaire* Newbottle may have been ended by his unfeeling jest. The young girl at last, perhaps, knew her mind; but it was too late. There was more in the rumour of the Princess from Mecklenburg than Harry Fox thought. Others were interested in the King's evident penchant for Lady Sarah—Lord Bute, and the Princess Dowager, and the Privy Council. The conscientious young King submitted his own personal feelings to the advice of his Ministers. Colonel Grahame, who had been sent all over Europe to inspect the likely royal spinsters, reported favourably on Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and the royal romance was at an end.

It was all over; there was no doubt about it at all. The King summoned the Council to announce the marriage, and Lord Harcourt went over for the Princess, and the little self-possessed lady came across the Channel to Harwich, and was not sea-sick for above half an hour, but sang and played on the harpsichord nearly all the way. And when she got to England she was not dismayed by the greatness of the occasion or the splendour of the preparations; but she wondered a little at the number of ladies sent to meet her, and exclaimed '*Mon Dieu, il y en a tant!*' She turned

pale and her lip trembled a little as they approached the Palace. But when the Duchess of Hamilton, the younger of the incomparable Gunnings, smiled, she recovered herself and said, 'My dear duchess, you may laugh—you who have been married twice, but it is no joke to me.' One wonders how she knew so soon the history of Elizabeth Gunning, the 'mother of dukes,' and how much was told her of the kindness of the King for Lady Sarah.

Poor Lady Sarah ! When all this became clear, she wrote the most human of letters to her friend and confidante, Lady Sue, that ever came from a disappointed lover. 'To begin to astonish you as much as I was, I must tell you the [King] is going to be married to a Princess of Mecklembourg and that I am sure of it. Does not your Chollar rise at hearing this. . . . I shall take care to shew that I am not mortified to anybody, but if it is true that one can vex anybody with a reserved cold . . . manner, he shall have it I promise him. . . . Luckily for me, I did not love him, only liked. . . . I did not cry I assure you. . . . The thing I am most angry at is looking so like a fool, having gone so often for nothing.' And so on, and so forth ; and Lady Sue is not to mention it to any one except her father and mother, Lord and Lady Ilchester, for it will be said that they invent 'storries,' and it might do the family a lot of harm and her no good.

Poor Lady Sarah !—and her troubles were not over yet, either. The King selected her as one of the bridesmaids, 'all beautiful figures,' says Mr. Walpole, 'but with neither features nor air, Lady Sarah was by far the chief angel.' The marriage did not take place till ten at night. There was the Princess in a stomacher of surpassing richness, 'her tiara of diamonds very pretty,' and her violet mantle and ermine of prodigious heaviness. There were the pretty bridesmaids, with Lady Sarah at their head, all in a row ; and the King had more eyes for Lady Sarah than for his bride all through the ceremony. When it was over, up comes my Lord Westmorland, the old Jacobite, who has hardly any eyes at all, mistakes Lady Sarah for the Queen, drops on one knee, and takes her hand to kiss it ; Lady Sarah has to draw back with a blush, and cry 'I am not the Queen, sir,' and George Selwyn utters that bitter jest : ' You know, he always loved Pretenders.' Did ever romance end in such embarrassment for a poor young girl of sixteen ?

Now it was all over, Mr. Fox again took up his pen to assure 'all whom it might concern' that there was not much in it, after all. When the Princess was really decided upon, 'Lady Sal'

met the King, it seems, and 'answered short with dignity, and a cross look,' exactly as she had promised in her letter to Lady Sue. 'To many a girl,' continues Mr. Fox sententiously, 'H.M.'s behaviour had been very vexatious, but the sickness of her Squirrell immediately took up all her attention, and when in spite of her nursing it dy'd, I believe it gave her more concern than H.M. ever did. That grief however soon gave way to the care of a little Hedge Hog that she sav'd from destruction in the field, and is now her favourite.' O sly Mr. Fox, and happy Lady Sarah thus to be able to bury her griefs!

It was in the year following the King's marriage that Lady Sarah threw in her lot with one of her admirers, and became the wife of Sir Thomas Charles Bunbury, a young man of fashion of great personal attractions, a light of the Macaronies of Almack's and White's, and noted among sportsmen as the owner of Diomed, the winner of the first Derby. But the marriage was not a success. As was not seldom the case in the society of her day, a girlhood closed too abruptly by an early and ill-advised marriage was followed by a period of unhappiness and unrest. There was much scandal recorded in the memoirs of the time, in connection with Lady Sarah Bunbury's name, which we need not repeat here. Much of it is utterly unconvincing. But her short unhappy married life with Sir Charles came to an end with proceedings at Doctors' Commons and the House of Lords in 1776.

Lady Sarah really began her life only when, five years later, she became the second wife of the Honourable George Napier, the sixth son of the fourth lord. We have taken her early romance as the subject of this paper, and this second married life does not concern us here, and yet it is the part of her career one would like best to dwell upon. It is pleasant to speculate upon the domestic happiness and maternal care which went to the rearing of such sons as the heroic Napiers—sons distinguished, amongst a crowd of distinguished contemporaries, in everything which makes the fame of soldiers and gentlemen. Fate was kinder to Lady Sarah in her age than in her youth. She lived to hear, from the great general of the Peninsular war himself, of the glory her sons were earning under his eye; and long before her death, in 1826, she must have been assured of the brilliant fulfilment of the promise of their youth, which is now a precious page of the history of their country. In the stirring times of the opening years of this century, the romance and the unhappiness of Lady Sarah's youth were forgotten by most of her contemporaries. The

years as they rolled on had brought cares and anxieties for George the Third in a measure greater than for most of his subjects. In his blundering, obstinate, but honest way, the King bore a personal part in all the great events of his reign, as long as his reason remained with him. But he remembered his first love through them all. Years after his marriage with the Queen he turned to her in the royal box at the play when Mrs. Pope, who was reckoned like Lady Sarah, came on, and was heard to remark, 'She is very like Lady Sarah still.' Years after this again, when George the Third was really dead to every sense that makes up human life, deaf, blind, bereft of reason, wandering through his palace and dreaming his old life over again, holding courts, reviewing troops, opening Parliaments, some who could remember the royal romance were reminded that it still lingered in the memory of its heroine. Dean Andrews of Canterbury preached a charity sermon at St. James's Church, in Piccadilly, for the benefit of an institution for the blind—founded, as he told his hearers, by his majesty at the time his own sight began to fail. The Dean was eloquent, and George Tierney, the Whig leader, who was present, records that his eloquence was heightened by the remembrance of the pitiful condition of the King. Tierney noticed an elderly lady in the seat immediately in front of him, who wept much at the Dean's mention of the distresses of his majesty. When the sermon was ended, servants came for this lady and led her out of the church, when it appeared that Lady Sarah Napier was herself totally blind.

It might be interesting, but would certainly be unprofitable, to speculate upon what might have happened in English history had Lady Sarah Lennox become Queen of England. We all know the tremendous part played in the national fortunes by the personality of George the Third—a personality moulded, as time went on, by the troubles which beset him in his own family. Those troubles, as many believe, had much of their origin in the negative virtues of Queen Charlotte, whose absolute devotion to the King left little place in her heart for his sons. We know, too, that Lady Sarah's sons were distinguished above their fellows in manliness and ability and bravery. But who shall say what might have been her influence on the King and the royal princes which might have been born to her, had her warm and loving nature shone upon the Court, instead of the prim and cold personality of the Princess from Mecklenburg-Strelitz?

JAMES MOWBRAY.

*AN ORIGINAL.*

TOBY TAPLIN'S position at Barfthorpe was one of importance in his day, of much more importance than he would have allowed from native modesty and for business reasons. He had started in life as a blacksmith, but by degrees had extended his business, and was local horse and cow doctor, dentist in general, and not seldom medical man to the country folks for ten miles round, as well as churchwarden and overseer of the poor and highways. Circumstances and his own innate desire to be of use to his fellowmen had made him take to the farriery and dentistry, for he loved to be 'in the know,' and have a 'finger in every pie,' without standing forward as a man of importance. The self-important man in every grade in life was the butt of honest Toby's raillery, the constant theme of his good-humoured pleasantry and lighter satire. Unfortunately for himself he sometimes said things that smarted, that even rankled for years; but they were the innocent outpourings of a wide heart which possessed a sharper tongue and more pointed wit than its owner ever recognised.

In addition to his many other occupations, Toby Taplin kept a shop, which he carried on conjointly with his son—'a great, slauomy, slab-sided lad,' to use the expressive language of the sty applied by his maternal parent to her first-born and exact male counterpart. The goods were stored in a disused barn, built against the smithy, and were such a miscellaneous collection as only a man long accustomed to attend local sales could have brought together. Odds and ends of brass, iron, and lead, lay scattered in heaps among broken machines, while old oak carving, rifled from many a religious house of ancient fame, so beautiful that it attracted even Toby's untrained eye, was piled up in one corner half hiding a large leaden coffin which had been dug up in sinking the foundations of the barn wall. There, too, was an old-fashioned and cumbrous mangle, which was too large for his house, as it had been made for the Anderson Hall laundry. This was free to the whole parish on the payment of a penny per basket provided they ran their own clothes through it. Toby's neighbours expected him to keep various goods in stock, as oil, salt, whiting, white-lead, nails, screws, small tools, gunpowder and shot in quantity, flints, and, at a later period, guncaps. A large cask of arsenic formed part of his stock-in-trade, which he sold to the

farmers for dressing their corn at the high figure of twopence per pound, and to other customers, servant-lads especially, who bought it 'to make their horses' coats shine,' at twopence per ounce.

A right worthy representative of the industrious, pushing, masterful yeoman was Toby Taplin, a true outcome of village life and rural activities, a man liberal to the core in every sense, and perhaps the most influential and widely known member of 'the party of progress' in North Lincolnshire in his day, but withal a living terror to friend and foe alike when 'on the stump'; for his 'terrible tongue' denounced the staple commodity of political harangues 'bamboozle'em and humbug' in either camp with a readiness, versatility, and freshness, as startling as it was inimitable. The most liberal man in the world with personal invective in private life, he never stooped to it or would permit it in canvassing, and on one occasion actually refused to vote to show his contempt for some vile abuse heaped on 'as straight a young man as ever stepped,' who was standing in the Tory interest.

When we first met him, Toby was some seventy years of age, in height about five feet eight inches, and 'thick set,' suggesting that in early life he had possessed great physical strength, which his first-born had inherited from him, for, in the language of the village, the lad was 'strong as a horse, clumsy as a bull, and old-fashioned as a vixen,' a description so contradictory and yet so truthful, that old Toby laughed over it for a week and repeated it a hundred times, adding 'and as gentle as a lamb, like me,' by way of giving it additional point. A very dark complexion did not hide the expressive kindness of Toby's face, which, if half were true his neighbours whispered of him, did not belie his actions except in one particular—this was not being able to resist saying what 'came to his tongue's end,' or telling a good tale even if it hurt the tenderest feelings of his nearest neighbours or best friends. The squire, parson, everybody, friend or foe, suffered alike; it was a disease, 'a lax flux of words,' as he called it himself, but such words as few men have. Moreover, if Toby heard a good tale away from home, he must needs localise in his own county, placing it to the account of the person whom it best fitted. This most unfortunate gift of 'the great story-teller' was the cause of all the trouble and rows he ever got into. It was he who published wide and far the tale of Jobber Billy Varlow and the circuit preacher, till at last it appeared in *The Torch o' Freedom*, a highly reputable Radical print. A certain college-trained circuit

preacher, the son of a successful Barnsley pig-jobber, thought he knew more about the arts and ways of country life and farming than those who had been bred up to it all their lives. 'As many parsons does, both Church and Methody,' Toby always added when telling this tale, 'especially these run-a-gate chaps. Why, John Wesley says himself,<sup>1</sup> " Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense nor grace, bawl out something about Christ or His blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, What a fine Gospel sermon ! " And it's not only the Gospel they knows, but everything else, everybody's business—let alone their own. Preaching the Gospel and farming's that easy that you can do it from the light o' nature like—wi'out learning ! ' The way in which Mr. Beardsley tried to instruct his flock did not always suit them ; but he did it with such a knowing air and unction, and in such an authoritative way, that the greater part, with their limited experience and untrained minds, looked up to him as an oracle in matters secular as well as spiritual. Our friend, the smith, and a man who was known by the designation and name of Jobber Billy Varlow were exceptions to a far from general rule. Their dislike to him arose from two causes : Toby was a High Calvinist and Churchman, Jobber Billy 'a heathen,' or, in the language of the minister, 'one of the unconverted.' But their ill-will would never have become aggressive had he not put into *The Torch o' Freedom* a letter headed 'Gross Superstition in North Lincolnshire,' describing an operation which they had performed on a cow's tail for a disease known to the farriers of old as *tailworm*. The details of their 'deed of infamy' were purely imaginary, and as luridly accurate as the inner self-consciousness and vivid pictorial gift of the half-educated preacher could invent.

Many and many a time had smith or jobber tried to catch 'the blethering fellow' in his statements or advice, hiding their feelings the while under the mask of an apparent friendship, which laughed over the letter with its author while they asked for instruction about tailworm, so as to make their blow tell with all the more effect when it came ; but hitherto they had signally failed in finding a right occasion and subject, for the real essence of a good village joke, the 'hocussing' of a self-important fool to the top of his bent, is not so easily carried into execution as designed. Their long-expected opportunity came at last. The jobber had been to Ketton Fair and bought twenty gimbars or so at a rather high figure, as he knew exactly where to place

<sup>1</sup> Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 278.

them, for even in the days we write of it was not every farmer who had the brains to buy or sell stock.

‘Of course, our Preacher, when he heard of it,’ said Toby, ‘must have a look at ‘em, and pass his judgment on quality, size, and skins, just as if he knew ought aboot it. Now, while he was a-looking ‘em over, stithering (*i.e.* chattering) like a bairn with the gripes, he says as knowing-like as anything, “There are several ways of ascertaining the age of sheep, Billy! How did you test the age of these, man?”

“Why, like a horse,” says our jobber, and opens the mouth of one to show the Preacher what he meant. “Why, I’ll be blessed, Billy! It has no upper teeth, man,” cries our parish fool. Now, Billy is as dully-quick as most on us, and he seed his chance had come. He began to rave and swear and examine every gimmer his dog was holding up, and curious enough it turned out they were all alike in that respect. Then Billy began to dance and spin aboot like a skoperil (*i.e.* teetotum) and swore awful, and kept on saying, “Who would have thought it, now; who’d have thought it of old Harrison, when me and him has done hundreds o’ bits o’ trade together? Don’t let on, Parson; pray don’t, now! If you does I shall be the laughing-stock of all this side of the country, and lose my trade into the bargain!” Well, his Reverence gave some sort of a promise that left him a mousehole to creep through, for he told several of the farmers he met going to Brigg market next day how his friend Varlow had been done at Ketton Fair. The farmers all entered into Billy’s joke, and knew enough to leave him where they found him, and he had all the song for three days, till an old class-leader and shepherd told him how he was being fooled. He was suddenly called away from home then by important business, and didn’t get back till the following Saturday week, when what was his rage to see in his paper, on looking down the news of the villages, this heading under the name of our parish: “How shall a parson lead his flock when he knoweth not how they feed?” Me and Billy had got our scholmaster to turn scribe, and write out our tale in full, without giving names. But we just added as the gutters of a row of cottages he owned in the place was full of grass hanging down to the bedroom windows, that he was laying in his meadows as a toothsome top-bite for his ewes no doubt—leastways, his own spout was green enough.’

What a good time Toby and Billy had that Saturday night among the bar-company at host Crumpet’s at the ‘Tupshead’, only those can realise who appreciate the wit of the soil—that child

of personal experience—at its true value. Many an extra glass was drunk as the jobber took off the parson's well-known voice and manner, and described how nearly it was the death of him to act his chosen part and keep from laughing outright as he fooled 'the naturally wise man.' Taplin declared to his dying day that the preacher never mentioned the words 'sheep' or 'flock' again in the pulpit as long as he was in the circuit, but he did not attend chapel, and we never heard any other evidence for this statement; and honest Toby would never spoil a tale for lack of point if he could help it, though in other ways the most truthful of men.

His 'unruly member' was always getting the master-smith into trouble, though his kindness was proverbial. 'As good-hearted as Toby Taplin,' is a phrase we have heard on the lips of many a person who never knew him in the flesh. But his description of neighbours in such terse and rememberable terms as some of the following, even though in some cases he was secretly helping them, or doing their work and asking no pay, and pressing no one for money, was not likely to engender kindness.

Of mankind in general Toby's dictum ran: 'The Lord must have mercy on asses, for they've no mercy on themselves.' How different a speech from Carlyle's bitter 'Mostly fools.'

'Where there's muck there's money.' Only those who know our dialect as their mother-tongue can thoroughly appreciate the treble depth of this gnomic utterance. 'Muck' is our common name for road-mud, which implies heavy cartage, *i.e.* prosperity; 'muck' is also the common local name for farmyard manure, which again implies prosperity; 'muck,' again, is a name applied to 'dirty trade tricks,' which too often spell prosperity. The occasion and inflection of the voice imply which of the three meanings is referred to, or whether all three are implied at once.

A farmer with little beyond his crop and inventory was thus described: 'He's *some* stock! Two or three old cows, and a house full o' bairns.'

Of a bankrupt sot who had not the will to resist drink: 'It'll find him out and kill him, though he were hid in a whale's belly. It's the way o' the world. God can't help the man who loses his chances.'

When he heard of a neighbour freshly converted to Primitive Methodism: 'It takes time and patience, and more prayer than Bill can give to become holy.'

Of a young scientific farmer with more theory than experience or patience: 'He's like enough to get what he wants, fishing for

guineas with a wheat scoup (*i.e.* wooden shovel) in the wash-dyke, instead of turniping his sheep and mucking (*i.e.* manuring) his top farm.'

Later, of the same man: 'Why, he hasn't sense to bait a mousetrap, nor to know where his own boot pinches! There's more tricks in farming than are dreamt on yet, but a bellowing bull-calf won't find 'em out.'

Of another husbandman who had taken a large farm with insufficient capital: 'He's like a mawk with a cheese all to hissen; he'll never get through with it.'

The Wesleyan Mission-women, who visited the smithy and asked if Toby were 'converted,' received the reply: 'Well, my lass, the more I knows o' life the less I thinks on it, for I sees it's possible to be good, uncommon good, converted good, without being good enough; so, I says to mysen, I'll just fear God as though I'd never obeyed Him, and love Him as though I'd never sinned again Him, and trust the rest to Him, without any o' your daily own-soul righteousness tasting, just to see how it comes on, like gooseberry wine in cask. This here kind o' daily soul-sampling all ends, my lass, like Mary Panther's Christmas at the Hall—after plum-pudding and brandy-sauce she felt like going up Elsham Hill in a whirligig.'

To the new Anglican clergyman, appointed on Parson Fitz-Henry's death, after he had spent half the morning in trying to persuade Toby to remain in the choir and wear a surplice: 'Yes, it's only right to hear the other side of the question, as you say; it learns one to stick to one's own opinion, 'cause it's right. You see I'm not one to go out seeking wool and come home shorn, or asses and find a kingdom, and St. Paul tells us to "suffer fools gladly," at least the clergy should.'

But perhaps Toby's most finished effort in retributive criticism—one of the last acts of his life—was denouncing his bosom friend in the smithy to his face, no less a person than the editor of *The Torch o' Freedom*, for writing against the farmers' introducing the self-binder into the harvest-field as a means of saving wages: 'Man, you call yourself a Liberal? Your paper Liberal? Why it's bigoted silly, I say. You won't have a duty on corn, you won't let the farmer get his harvest as cheap as he can? How's he to live at all? Away with your canting o' freedom, whilst you're counting your gains for selling soft silliness by the yard! As if *you* didn't know any better, bunging up poor ignorant folks wi' such lies. I tell you a paper-editor wants to be as wise as an owl, as old-fashioned as the serpent, and as perky-like as a jackdaw,

but you're a mule between a Methodistical Bible-woman and a drunken play-actor, and a bad one at that—you're neither saintly nor comical.' The poor editor, a good fellow at bottom for all his mistakes, fled incontinently, without waiting for more, but with a parting shot from Toby ringing in his ears: 'When I speak o' freedom I don't mean the first lie that comes for a living.'

The correspondence on self-binders was dropped 'like a hot potato,' and one on anti-vaccination substituted, a change which drew from Toby, lying on his death-bed, the characteristic criticism: 'That's a common reserved by public consent for ignorant asses to bray on. When a man that knows nought about a matter thinks he's just as good a right to talk as a man that knows all about it, the only way I knows on is to let him talk on till he's tired o' the job, or the next silly craze comes into his head. All anti-vaccinationists were Tichbornites once, I well remember; they'll be bigamites next perhaps. There's no hard sound reason why they shouldn't be; they were in Testament times, Old and New, they are in Germany still, I'm told. A few real good braying asses on bigamy wi' "Nonconformist consciences" would be a treat while the thing was new. The worst on it is, the deils never know when folks get tired o' their emptiness and want o' wit.'

With old Toby 'the desire of talking was always a first motion'; he could not resist uttering what 'flew to his tongue's end,' especially as there was such a general aptness about his thoughts. Every one listened while he talked, as the giants of the old Literary Club listened to Sam Johnson, their acknowledged master; and such a reputation did he acquire at last that if anything happened in the whole country-side the first question everybody asked was: 'What has Toby said about it?'

Amongst his treasured things Toby could show the coat through which a half-ounce ball passed while he was undoing the breech of a rifle. He took it off the moment after the accident happened and hung it up in the house as a trophy never to be worn again. He so fully believed in the old-world doctrine of predestination that no ordinary circumstance could shake him. His only answer to inquiries after the rifle escape was the calm reply, 'It was so ordained, and what mun (*i.e.* must) happen will happen; there's no two ways about that.' The coat hanging in his kitchen was proof enough for him; his being a farrier and a dentist was a proof. 'These things,' he used to say with reverence, 'were to happen, and so have come about without any plan or forethought on anybody's part, least of all my own.' The honest fellow was

deceived by his own unpremeditated alertness and penetrativeness ; he was not a man of forethought but of action ; seeing his duty, regardless of consequences, he did it with all his might.

This made Toby the man he was—the only one in the whole neighbourhood who dared to go through the churchyard alone by night for fear of walking spirits. When he was a young man he had made one of his friends sorry till the day of his death for doubting his intrepidity, even if he were not the actual cause of the man's early decease. Some of his companions, knowing that Toby was working very late at the Beck Farm, and that he must cross the churchyard or go a long way round, determined they would test his courage. Nerving themselves up with drink, a dozen faced the terrors of the spot in the winter's darkness ; and one, covered with a white sheet, waited for their victim in the church porch with a companion. The click of the gate-latch warned them of the smith's approach, and as he drew up to the porch, which the path passed, out stepped the ghost right in front of him. Toby stood for half a second, and then, without a word, struck the white figure on the top of the head with a plough coulter he was taking home to sharpen. The never-to-be-forgotten sound of breaking bone brought him to his senses ere the sheeted figure fell without a groan in a heap at his feet ; and the appearance of the rest of the conspirators was not required to convince Toby how nearly he had committed murder. Everything that promptitude and despatch could suggest was done at once. The poor fellow, grievously injured and badly marked for life, was taken to the house which Toby had just left, and the best skill in the neighbourhood obtained. But six months' illness did not suffice to make the blithest and best of his friends a man again, for he could never undertake hard work afterwards, and died suddenly from a brain spasm in his thirty-seventh year, regretted by all, and long and sincerely mourned by the smith, who always condemned himself as the cause of the poor fellow's death, though no one else blamed him. Toby readily acknowledged that at the time he struck the blow he had no sense or thought of danger, and only acted on a sudden impulse to strike and see what would come of it ; and declared that if 'he had been looking out for things instead of thinking of his spanking lass,' his heart would have failed him and he would have 'taken to his heels.' He looked after the widow, and when she married again, brought up his friend's five children as his own ; verily his heart was as wide as his arm was strong.

Once only to his own knowledge was the iron nerve of this

man of iron completely shaken to pieces. He was about sixty years old, with mental and vital powers as good as ever as far as he knew. A horse had called him from home to some distance, and on his return he found his lad, the 'slaumy, slab-sided' giant of former days, out in exactly the opposite direction tending a valuable shorthorn bull seized with sudden inflammation, so Toby sat down to his tea intending to follow the young veterinary, whom he only 'half trusted for all his college education and learning.' Scarcely had he tasted 'bite or sup' before a girl opened the door and said innocently enough to Mrs. Taplin, 'Please, mum, can we borrow a candlestick for the barn? Some one's taken the one that was there. We've set our candle in the barrel of black stuff, but we can't see to do our mangling.' Toby rose from his chair without hurry and without word or sign. He even reached down his cap as he passed out at the door, and put it on; but the act was purely automatic, he could never remember doing it afterwards. On he strode at his usual pace to the barn and made straight for the sixteen-stone barrel in which the lighted candle was standing, propped up by being sunk into and surrounded by gunpowder. Stooping down, with hands that never trembled, he shaded the flame with his left and raised it slowly from the powder with his right hand. Turning with equal deliberation to the door he said to the older woman who had remained at the mangle, 'Come with me, Mary.' But that was all. By the time he reached his own back-door eighty yards away reaction had set in throughout Toby's strong frame, his arms were shaking with palsy, and he had not breath to blow out the light, but dropped it down, still burning, on the floor, as he staggered and reeled into the house, 'with no more power to close the door behind him than a new-born babe.' Deadly pale and shaken as it were by sobs, in a voice that no one recognised as his, Toby gasped out in jerky sentences, 'Candle—powder-keg—Go lock door, wife—Brandy—Give me brandy.' The heedless woman had stuck her candle into an open barrel of fine powder, from which only some twenty-five pounds had been sold. Till his dying day Toby spoke with bated breath of 'that mercy' which had saved wife and grandchildren, with many of their surrounding neighbours, from a sudden and awful death. 'You may believe like me,' he would say, 'but when you have to walk up to a sixteen-stone barrel of fine powder with a naked light in it, you don't know which way it's going to be, you see. A man has but to live to learn what fear is! It's asses as never learns anything.'

*'HOVELLING.'*

WHAT particular law of etymology has been evoked to produce the queer word standing at the head of this paper I am unable to imagine. Like Topsy, I 'spects it growed,' but my own private opinion is that it is the Kentish-coast way of pronouncing the word 'hovering,' since the hovellers are certainly more often occupied in hovering than in doing anything more satisfactory to themselves.

However strange the word may sound in a landsman's ears, it is one of the most familiar to British seamen, especially among our coasters, although the particular form of bread-winning that it is used to designate is practically confined to the Kent and Sussex shores of the English Channel, having its headquarters at Deal. Briefly, a 'hoveller' is a boatman who follows none of the steady orthodox lines of boatmanship—such as fishing, plying for passengers, &c.—but hovers around the Channel, a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, a pilot, a wrecker, or, if a ghost of a chance presents itself, a smuggler.

Naturally, the poor hoveller does not bear the best of characters. The easy unconventional fit of his calling settles that for him as conclusively as the generic term 'general dealer,' so often seen in police-court reports, does a man's status ashore, but with far less reason. It must be admitted that he is not over scrupulous or prone to regard too rigidly the laws of *meum* and *tuum*. The portable property which occasionally finds its way into his boat is, however, usually ownerless except for the lien held by the Crown upon all flotsam, jetsam, and ligan, which rights—all unjust as he in common with most seafarers considers them to be—he can hardly be blamed for ignoring.

But when the worst that can be alleged against the character of the hoveller has been said, a very large margin of good remains to his credit—good of which the general public never hears, or, hearing of it, bestows the praise elsewhere.

They are the finest boatmen in the world. Doubtless this seems a large claim to make on their behalf, but it is one that will be heartily endorsed by all who know anything of the condition of the English Channel in winter, and are at the same time in a

position to make comparisons. And it must also be remembered that the harvest of the hoveller is gathered when the wintry weather is at its worst; when the long, hungry snare of the Goodwins is snarling and howling for more and more of man's handiwork to fill its for ever unsatisfied maw; when the whole width of the Strait is like a seething cauldron, and the air is one weltering whirl of hissing spindrift; while the hooting sirens, shrieking whistles, and clanging bells from the benighted and groping crowd of unseen vessels blend their discord with the tigerish roar of the storm in one bewildering chaos of indescribable tumult.

Then, when the fishermen have all run for shelter, and even the hardy tugboats hug some sheltering spit or seaward-stretching point, the hoveller, in his undocked clinker-built lugger, some thirty-five feet long and ten feet beam, square-stered and sturdy-looking like himself, may be seen through the writhing drifts of fog and spray climbing from steep to steep of the foaming billows like a bat hawking along some jagged cliff.

She shows just a tiny patch of brown sail, a mere shred, but sufficient to keep her manageable with her head within five or six points of the wind and her stub-bow steadily pointed to the onrush of the toppling seas. Every other wave sends a solid sheet of spray right over her, hiding her momentarily from view; but the row of squat figures sitting motionless along the weather gunwale heed it no more than if they were graven images. And thus they cruise, hungry and thirsty, eyeballs burning with sleeplessness, throughout the weary hours of night and day, with every sense acutely strained and every moment balanced upon the very scythe-edge of death. Long practice makes them keen of sight as the wailing gulls overhead, and small indeed must be the floating object that escapes their unremitting scrutiny.

Homeward-bound sailing ships from oversea ports are what they principally lust after. The skippers of these vessels, after their long absence from home, usually feel more or less anxious as they near the narrows. The Trinity pilots, in their trim cutters, have their cruising-ground definitely fixed for them by authority, extending no further west than Dungeness. But long before that well-known point, with its dazzling spear of electric radiance reflected from the gloomy pall of cloud above, is reached, the homeward-bound skipper's anxiety becomes almost unbearable if the weather be thick and he has as yet made no landfall to verify

his position. Then the sudden appearance of a hoveller emerging from the mirk around, and his cheery hail, 'D'ye want a pilot, sir?' is heavenly in its relief. For these men, although regarded with no small contempt and disfavour by the aristocracy of pilotage licensed by the Trinity Brethren, know the Channel as a man knows the house he has lived in for years—know it at all times, whether in calm or storm, the blackness of winter midnight, the brilliance of summer noon, or the paralysing uncertainty of enshrouding fog.

The hoveller can hardly be blamed if he takes full advantage of the foulness of the weather to drive as hard a bargain as he can with the skipper of a hesitating homeward-bounder for the hire of his invaluable local knowledge. Full well he knows that when the skies are serene and the wind is favourable he may tender his services in vain, even at the lowest price. No master, in these days of fierce competition, dare make an entry of a hoveller's fee in his bill of expenses, except under pressure of bad weather, on pain of being considered unfit for his post, and finding himself compelled to pay the charge out of his own scanty salary.

So that fine weather to the hoveller spells empty pocket and hungry belly. The long bright days of summer bring to him no joy, though thoughtless passengers lounging at their ease upon the promenade deck of some palatial steamship may think his lot a lazy, lotus-eating way of drowsing through the sunny hours. Neither would they imagine from his wooden immobility of pose and the unbending appearance of his rig what fiery energy he is capable of displaying when opportunity arises.

On one occasion, when I was a lad of eighteen, we were homeward bound from Luzon to London. We sighted Corvo dimly through the driving mist of a fierce westerly gale before which we bowled along at the rate of 300 miles a day. For nearly five days we fled thus for home, seeing nothing except an occasional dim shape of some vessel flitting silently past. Not a glimpse of the heavenly bodies was vouchsafed us whereby to fix our position, nor did we haul up once for a cast of the deep-sea lead. At last by 'dead reckoning' we were well up Channel, but the steady thrust of the gale never wavered in force or direction. The mist grew denser, the darkness more profound. By the various sounds of foghorns and whistles we knew that many vessels surrounded us, and that it was scarcely less dangerous to heave-to than to run. Presently by the narrowest of shaves we missed running down a

light outward-bound barque, the incident leaving us with yards braced every way and a general feeling of uncertainty as to what would happen next. Suddenly out of the gloom to leeward came the hoarse cry, 'Want a pilot, sir?' It was the sweetest music imaginable. All eyes were strained in the direction of the voice. In a minute or two the well-known shape of a hovelling lugger became visible, under a double-reefed lug, rushing towards us. He rounded-to under our lee quarter, and in reply to our skipper's query, 'How much will you take me up to the Ness for?' came the prompt reply, 'Ten pounds.' 'Ten devils!' yelled our skipper. 'Why, you adjective hovelling pirate, it's only about ten minutes' walk!' 'Better get out 'n walk it then, Cap'n,' said the boatman; 'can't take you up for no less to-night.' The usual haggling began, but was cut short by the hoveller, who shouted, 'So long, Cap'n; time's precious,' giving at the same time a pull at his tiller which sent the boat striding a cable's length to leeward. 'All right,' roared the old man; 'come aboard, an' be dam'd t' you!' and at the word the lugger was alongside again. Launching his dingy was out of the question in such a sea, for at one moment the boat was level with our shearpoles, the next she seemed groping under our keel. 'Heave us a line, Cap'n,' shouted the pilot, and the mate hurled a coil of the lee main brace at him. Quick as a wink he had cast a bowline round his waist with the end. 'Haul away aboard!' he cried, and, as his boat rose on the crest of a big sea, he sprang at the ship and missed her. But he had hardly time to disappear in the smother of foam before he was being dragged up the side like a bale of rags, and almost instantly tumbled on deck. Springing to his feet, he dashed the water out of his eyes, and, as calmly as if nothing unusual had happened, said to the man at the wheel, 'Put your hellum up, m'lad; square away the main yard, haul aft the main sheet,' and as if by magic the weather seemed to fine down and a great peace reigned. 'Steady as she goes, m'lad,' said he to the helmsman, with a peep at the compass; and then, turning to the skipper, with a wheedling note in his voice, 'You couldn't spare my mates a bit o' grub, I s'pose, sir, and a plug er terbacker?' 'Oh, yes,' replied the Captain with alacrity. 'Stooard! Get a couple o' pieces of beef out o' the harness-eask, and some bread in a bag, for the boatmen. I'll go down and get 'em some tobacco.' Already the lugger was closing in on us again, and by the time the longed-for provisions were at hand she was near enough for them to be hove on board.

A further plea for a drop of rum could not be entertained, as we had none ; but, well pleased with the result of their visit, the rovers sheered off, and were swallowed up in the encircling darkness. Exactly three-quarters of an hour later we rounded the Ness and hove-to for the pilot, the lugger popping up under our lee again as if she had been towing astern, and receiving back the lucky hoveller with his fat fee in his pocket.

Years after, in a much larger ship, of which I was second mate, we were bound right round the coast to Dundee, and got befogged somewhere off Beachy Head. As on the previous occasion, the wind was strong, and blowing right up Channel. A hoveller came alongside and made a bargain to take us up to Dungeness for ten pounds. By the time he had scrambled on board our Captain began to wonder whether he might be available to pilot us right round to Dundee, not feeling very confident in his own knowledge of the navigation of the East Coast. So he put the question to our visitor, who replied that he himself was not qualified, and indeed would not be allowed to do so if he were. But he could arrange to have a North Sea pilot out in Deal roads awaiting us on our arrival there. This was too much for our skipper's power of belief. That cockleshell of a lugger able to outstrip his 1400-ton ship, with this breeze behind her, so much in forty miles ! It couldn't be done. 'Never mind, sir,' said the hoveller. 'You make my money thirteen pounds for the whole job ; and if you have to wait in the Downs for your pilot, you needn't pay me more 'n ten.' 'It's a go,' answered the Captain, fully satisfied.

Hailing his boat, the Dealman gave his instructions. Crowding on all sail, away she went, sheering in for the shore, and soon was lost to sight in the mist. Meanwhile we also set all the sail we could carry, and made a fairly rapid run to the Downs. Sure enough, there was a galley punt awaiting us, the men lying on their oars, and the pilot with his bag lounging in the stern. The skipper said not a word as he handed our hoveller his full money, but he looked like a man who had been badly beaten in a contest of wits.

But if one would see the hoveller at his best, it is when some hapless vessel has met her fate on the Goodwins during a gale. The silent suck of those never-resting sands makes the time of her remaining above water very short, without the certainty of her rapid breaking up under the terrible battering of the mighty seas.

Gathering around the doomed fabric like jackals round a carcass, the hardy beachmen perform prodigies of labour. The work which they will do, wrenching out cargo and fittings, and transferring them to their boats, while the straining, groaning hull threatens every moment to collapse beneath their eager feet, and the bitter tempest fills the air with salt spray, to say nothing of an occasional breaker which buries wreck and wreckers alike beneath its mighty mass of foaming water, cannot be adequately described—it must be seen to be realised. As if mad with desire, they tear and strain and heave like Titans, apparently insensible to fatigue. For they know that at any moment their prize may vanish from beneath them, and with her all their hopes of gain. Weather has for them no terrors. Let but the cry of 'Wreck!' go up, and, though even the lifeboat be beaten back, the hoveller will get there somehow; not under any pretence of philanthropy, but in the hope of earning something, though it may be gratefully recorded that they never shirk the most terrible risks when there is a hope of saving life.

Such sudden and violent transitions from utter idleness to the most tremendous exertion as they continually experience do not seem to harm these toughened amphibia. Plenty of them do, of course, go under in more or less distressing circumstances; but though their own tiny circle laments their loss, their tragic fate makes no more disturbance than the drop of a pebble outside of that little company. There are plenty to take their place; for even in so precarious a calling as hovelling there are grades. The poor possessors of only a four-oared galley hope to rise to the dignity of a lugger, so that they may quit scrabbling along the shores and get out to where, if the dangers are indefinitely increased, the chances of a good haul now and then are proportionately greater.

Another phase of their calling is the rescue of vessels which from various causes are drifting to destruction. Many a craft reaches port in safety with a couple of Dealmen on board, that but for their timely help would never have been heard of again. I know of one case where a large French *chasse-marée*, with a cargo of wine, lost her foremast off the Varne shoal. In its fall it crippled the skipper and one of the crew. Another one was frost-bitten, and the remaining two—both boys—were so paralysed with fright that they were quite useless. So in the grey of the New Year's dawn, with a pitiless snowstorm raging from the

N.W., she was drifting helplessly along the edge of the sand. Two hovellers saw her plight at the same time, and each strained every nerve to get up to her first, for she was a prize well worth the winning. At last they drew so near to her that it was anybody's race. But the head man of the foremost lugger tore off his oilskins, sea-boots, and fearnought jacket, and, plunging into the boiling sea, actually battled his way to her side, climbing on board triumphantly and so making good his claim. It is satisfactory to be able to add that the dauntless rascal was completely successful in bringing the *Trois Frères* into Dover, and shared with his four mates a hundred and twenty pounds for salvage services. Not a bad twenty-four hours' work ; but for nearly two months before they had earned less than five shillings per man per week, and they all had wives and families dependent upon them.

Yet with all their hardships they are free. No man is their master, for they always sail on shares, varied a little according to each individual's monetary stake in the boat. And doubtless the wild life has a certain charm of its own which goes far to counter-balance its severity and danger. 'And anyhow,' as one of them said to me not long ago, 'ourn's a bizness the bloomin' Germans ain't likely to do us out of. There ain't many left like that, is ther?'

FRANK T. BULLEN.

*THE DIPLOMACY OF ELLIS MINOR.*

IT was a blazing summer afternoon, and Ellis minor was reclining beside his friend Urquhart, better known to fame as Bunny. There are unwritten laws at every public school, and at Wellborough no self-respecting 'fellow' can watch a school cricket match without a rug, a cushion, or, in school language, a 'keish,' and one or more bags of fruit. It was at a period of the afternoon when the school was gorged and content, and was peacefully watching the Eleven piling up runs, that Ellis minor made a discovery. At such moments the intellect of the school was at its highest, and wags had been known to devise jokes that lasted for terms.

'I say, Bunny,' Ellis minor remarked suddenly, 'I believe Old Jimmy's mashed on your sister.'

'If you don't want to be kicked, young Ellis,' his companion replied, 'you'd better leave my sister alone.'

'Beastly sorry, old chap,' Ellis minor said, 'but I thought you'd like to know.'

'Rot!' Bunny said shortly. 'It isn't a bit funny.'

'Well, just look at them,' Ellis minor answered, sinking into a recumbent position, and searching in the bottom of the cherry bag.

After several minutes Bunny raised himself torpidly and contemplated his sister. Maude was, Bunny always thought, rather a responsibility. She occupied the position of governess to the headmaster's children, and, to do justice to Wellborough, that fact in itself was no disgrace. Being a pretty girl she even did Bunny credit in some ways, and at least one member of the Eleven was in love with her, but her presence about the place was disconcerting. It led to frequent invitations to the headmaster's and embarrassing acquaintanceships with other masters' wives. His friends sometimes avoided Bunny because his companionship dragged them into female society. Of course Bunny did his best to check the nuisance. That afternoon, for instance, he had merely nodded to her, and given her to understand that she must keep at a proper distance.

She was, at the moment when Bunny sighted her, conversing with the individual alluded to by Ellis minor as 'Old Jimmy.' As a matter of fact his age was about thirty, and his name was Arthur Baker. He enjoyed the doubtful privilege of teaching the Upper Fourth, in which form both Bunny and Ellis minor had been located for the last year. Three terms in the same form are not calculated to increase the mutual affection of masters and boys.

As Bunny watched them his brow clouded. The colloquy certainly appeared interesting, and Old Jimmy was apparently making himself both agreeable and amusing.

'What an ass he's making of himself!' Bunny remarked in disgust.

'He always does,' Ellis minor agreed.

'I told her what a beast he was,' Bunny continued.

'She doesn't seem to think so,' the other observed.

'I don't suppose a girl could really fall in love with Jimmy,' Bunny said.

'I don't know,' his companion replied meditatively. 'You see girls are such awful fools about men. They never really know what they're like. One of my sisters married an utter howler last holidays.'

'But Jimmy's such a cad,' Bunny objected, 'and after the way he's treated me, I do think she might be rude to him.'

'Of course,' he went on, after a pause, 'I know she was bound to marry one of the masters. Old Beetle's governesses always do, but I do draw the line at Jimmy. I hoped she'd marry Turner.'

Now Turner, though a double blue, was a shy and unfledged young man, and appealed more to the schoolboy than the female heart. Ellis minor thought her scarcely good enough for him, but tactfully refrained from saying so.

'Are you going to stop it?' he inquired.

'If it's necessary, I shall have a shot,' Bunny said loftily.

'I should hurry up if I were you,' Ellis minor suggested.

'When they begin to look like that there's generally something on.'

'She does look a bit rummy,' Bunny admitted, as his sister turned a smiling glance at Old Jimmy.

'If she was my sister,' Ellis minor continued, 'I'd manage to make it jolly hot for him. You can make it rather nasty for a chap when he's in love with your sister. You ought to be able to get your promo this term if you run the thing properly.'

'Get my promo?' inquired the less astute Bunny.

'Yes,' his friend replied. 'Every time he makes a cad of himself to you, you just go and rux her up about it. She won't mind badgering him a bit; if she's like my sisters she'll enjoy it. I only wish Old Jimmy was mashed on my sister. You might tell her what a beast he is to me, too.'

'I've a jolly good mind to try,' Bunny said. 'It's not half a bad idea. Let's go and have an ice.'

They strolled to the town together, while Ellis minor with a wisdom beyond his years, and gathered from many sisters, explained the *modus operandi* to the still doubtful Bunny.

Unconscious of their doom, the victims on the cricket-ground chatted on, and if Bunny could have heard their conversation, he might have been roused to even deeper indignation. As a matter of fact, his sister had been engaged to Old Jimmy for upwards of a week, and was at that moment discussing their future projects without a thought of Bunny or his ill-usage. Possibly, if she had been aware of his proposed interference, she also might have been somewhat apprehensive. For the present the engagement was necessarily a secret. Most of the Wellborough masters migrate in the fulness of time to become headmasters of other smaller schools, and at that same moment Mr. Baker was busy stalking the trustees of a grammar school with some success. If the engagement were announced before his election, he would be confronted with unpleasant parental questions as to ways and means, and to prophesy his election was scarcely diplomatic. Miss Urquhart was quite content with the arrangement. Every girl knows that an engagement is all the pleasanter before its announcement.

For a day or two Ellis minor's idea slumbered. He mooted it at intervals, but Bunny denominated it 'too much sweat,' and had scruples as to whether it was not 'rather bad form.' At the end of the week, however, his anger was roused to boiling point and his scruples scattered to the winds. Old Jimmy put him on *satisfecit*.

Now, being put on *satisfecit* is a disturbing process. At Wellborough no form master can cane a boy, but must deliver the victim over to the house-master for execution as a disinterested person. Sometimes, in cases of idleness, he is given one more chance. The culprit has for a certain period to furnish the house-master every evening with a paper signed by the form-master, and containing the mystic word '*satisfecit*', which sig-

nifies that the culprit's work for the day had been adequate. On the first evening on which this is not forthcoming the execution occurs.

Bunny was much incensed. He had no more fear of a caning than the average healthy schoolboy, provided it was soon over and done with, but he objected strongly to having it hanging over his head. That is, of course, the beauty of the institution of *satisfecit* from the disciplinary point of view.

'I wouldn't stand it if I were you,' Ellis minor observed sympathetically.

'I won't,' Bunny said, with indignation. 'I'll forbid Maude—I mean my sister—to speak to him.'

'I wouldn't do that, Bunny,' said the Machiavellian Ellis minor. 'It's no good telling a girl not to do a thing. You go and lay it on thick about how much a wanging hurts and all that, and what beastly cheek it is for him to get you caned. If that doesn't fetch her, you just threaten to bring your guv'nor into it somehow, and that'll make her sit up. Girls do hate their guv'nors getting muddled up in things like this, and your guv'nor seems to be waxy enough for anything.'

After some discussion they mapped out a plan of campaign, and that afternoon Bunny presented himself at the headmaster's house for tea. He had been accorded a standing invitation there, an invitation of which it is needless to say he never took advantage. Special invitations were bad enough. After a while the headmaster's wife tactfully left Bunny and his sister alone. She feared that a fourth-form boy, who bearded tea at the house unnecessarily, must be in some serious trouble.

'Maude,' he observed when she had departed, 'I've come to speak to you.'

'If you didn't try to eat muffins and strawberries at the same time, you might do it more easily,' his sister replied unfeelingly.

'Don't rot, Maude,' Bunny said; 'it's rather serious.'

'Would five shillings be enough?' she inquired.

'It's not money,' he said impressively; 'I shall probably be caned.'

'The wretched boy ate a hearty meal,' his sister replied without any proper display of emotion. 'What have you been doing this time, Lionel?'

'I'm on *satisfecit*,' he explained tragically.

'What a horrible crime!' she laughed. 'What in the world is it?'

'It's that brute Jimmy,' her brother burst out.

'Oh!' she said softly. If Ellis minor had been there, he would have noticed the blush. 'Tell me about it.'

Bunny told her about it, and about the nature of *satisfecit*, and the pangs of caning, and the enormities of Jimmy. It was a lengthy narrative, with artistic touches derived from Ellis minor, and Miss Urquhart listened with apparent interest. There was, however, a twinkle in her eyes which annoyed Bunny.

'And now,' he concluded, 'he's torturing me—slowly torturing me because I'm not clever.'

'Bosh!' his sister said. 'You're going to be caned because you're idle.'

'Do you mean to say you don't pity me?' Bunny asked.

'Not in the least,' she said placidly. 'I suppose you thoroughly deserve it.'

'Very well,' Bunny said decisively. 'I'll write to the guv'nor about it and see what he says.'

The twinkle disappeared from Miss Urquhart's eyes.

'Lionel,' she said, with sudden apprehension, 'if you do that, I'll never forgive you.'

'Why shouldn't I?' he inquired stolidly. 'He'll be down next day and make it jolly hot for Jimmy.'

Mr. Urquhart senior would certainly have regarded the occasion as a suitable one for a visit to Wellborough. He had a theoretical horror of corporal punishment and a passion for interfering with his son's school career. To Bunny's credit be it said that he had never hitherto appealed for parental intervention, nor at that moment had he any real intention of doing so, but the advice of Ellis minor was persuasively ingenious. The latter had, as one of the masters said, 'a bright but criminal future before him.'

'You don't want father to make another row, do you?' Maude inquired desperately.

'Don't I?' Bunny rejoined calmly; 'I want him to make such a row as two masters and a boy of our day cannot carry. It'll just about pip Old Jimmy.'

Miss Urquhart looked deeply distressed. Mr. Urquhart's prejudices when once aroused were difficult to overcome, and it was unlikely, if Bunny carried out his threat, that Mr. Baker

would ever be accepted with equanimity as a son-in-law. Besides, the intervention of a vindictive parent at this juncture might diminish the lustre of Mr. Baker's testimonials and references.

'Please don't, Lionel—to please me,' his sister said.

'Oh,' Bunny replied, surveying her with disdain, 'I see what it is. You're mashed on that cad of a man.'

'Lionel!' she burst out reprovingly.

'Oh, I don't mind,' he rejoined loftily. 'Please yourself, I don't very much object. In fact, it's rather a good thing. You can choke him off now.'

'What do you mean, you wretched boy?' she asked.

'Write him a note and tell him not to. Oh my tin hat! Won't he look bilious?'

'I won't,' she answered indignantly.

'Very well,' the graceless youth said, 'it's that or the guv'nor.'

Miss Urquhart pondered hesitatingly for a moment or two while Bunny eyed her triumphantly with the air of a successful blackmailer.

Then she did what was the most foolish thing possible under the circumstances: she gave Bunny a full account of her engagement and of the difficulties which he might create if he brought their father on the scene. 'That,' as Bunny subsequently explained to Ellis minor, 'gave the whole show away.' While fully agreeing with her estimate of the probable difficulties of such a situation, and even emphasising them with some ingenuity, he stolidly declined to abandon his threat, and reiterated it with even more verisimilitude than before.

It took some while longer, but Bunny held the trumps, and an hour or two afterwards, after a conference with Ellis minor, he strolled with an air of easy nonchalance into Mr. Baker's room with a note in his pocket.

'Well, Urquhart?' the latter inquired, 'come for your *satisfecit*?'

'Can I sit down?' Bunny replied carelessly.

'For the present you can,' the master said, with a chuckle at his powers of repartee, 'but I don't see why you should.'

'I've come to talk to you for a few minutes, Mr. Baker,' Bunny went on unabashed, 'and I hoped it might be a friendly conversation.'

'Did you?' Mr. Baker said in considerable astonishment. 'Personally I should have had my doubts.'

'You see,' Bunny announced, 'I've not come to speak to you exactly as a master. I've been talking to my sister this afternoon.'

'Oh!' said the other, turning a little red.

'I told her,' Bunny continued, 'that I was thinking of writing to my father about your conduct to me lately. It's become jolly insufferable, I can tell you.'

Mr. Baker was on the point of inflicting summary chastisement on the spot, but he managed to contain himself and to await further information.

'Of course,' Bunny pursued, 'she was naturally very much annoyed to hear that any one could treat her brother in such a way, and—'

'Did she say so?'

'No, she didn't exactly say so, but she looked as if she was. She's got a very expressive face, hasn't she, sir?'

'Urquhart,' the master began wrathfully.

'Oh, all right, don't be shirty. If a fellow can't talk about his own sister, whose sister can he talk about, I should like to know? Well, though she was very much annoyed, she interceded for you, and said that if the matter was put before you in its proper light you might manage to behave yourself. I had some doubts myself, you know—'

'There are limits, Urquhart,' the unfortunate man said angrily.

'That's just what I said to her,' Bunny interrupted imperturbably. 'She asked me to give you this note.'

Mr. Baker read the note rapidly. It set out the absolute necessity of mollifying Bunny for the present, and the possibly unpleasant consequences of parental intervention.

'You young scoundrel!' he exclaimed, 'I've a very good mind to knock you down.'

Bunny only grinned.

'Do you think it manly, Urquhart,' he asked, 'to attempt to shelter yourself behind your sister? It's not manly, it's not honourable.'

'It's jolly convenient,' Bunny said.

Mr. Baker rose and paced up and down the room, while Bunny watched him with ill-concealed delight.

'I'm very much disappointed in you, Urquhart,' he said at last, 'very much. I had hoped you had turned over a new leaf.'

You've been working better lately, and I intended to take you off *satisfecit* at the end of the week, but I don't see how I can do it now. It's a most unpleasant position. Much as I should like to, I can't have you caned, because you're not idle enough to be caned; and I can't take you off *satisfecit*, because then you'd say that I was afraid of your complaints to your father.'

Bunny looked a little shocked and surprised. He had not supposed that the situation would strike Old Jimmy quite in that light, but after a moment's reflection his equanimity returned. He concluded that this was Jimmy's tactful way of leading up to a surrender.

'Oh, of course, if you see now how hard I really work, it's quite easy,' he said triumphantly. 'You just chuck up the *satisfecit* business and we'll say no more about it.'

'We'll say no more about it, won't we?' the master answered, eyeing him grimly.

'I certainly shan't,' Bunny replied with apparent magnanimity. 'In fact, I promised my sister to hush the thing up as far as I could.'

'Your natural good feeling would of course compel you to do that, Urquhart?' Mr. Baker answered. There was a twitch about the corners of his mouth, which Bunny did not notice.

'Oh, I'm all right when I'm treated properly,' the latter remarked.

'Very well, Urquhart,' the master said, 'I've decided what I am going to do—subject of course to your approval. I want a day or two to think this over. As a boy of the world you can't, I suppose, object to that. I'll undertake to sign your *satisfecits* till Saturday, and then you can come and talk matters over again with me. Would that suit you?'

'I'd rather have the *satisfecit* taken off altogether at once,' Bunny answered.

'Surely,' Mr. Baker said, smilingly, 'you can understand that there must be—shall we say?—a certain amount of fiction in a delicate affair like this. It wouldn't do—ah! I see, you follow me. You mustn't be too hard even on a master when he's down.'

'All right,' Bunny agreed unsuspiciously in the flush of victory. 'I shouldn't wonder if that wouldn't be the best way of getting out of it. I don't want to be harder on you than I can help, you know.'

'Very good of you, I'm sure, Urquhart,' the master replied. 'Shall we say five o'clock on Saturday? Well, here's your *satisfecit* for to-day. I'm afraid we must end this interesting conversation now, or you'll be late for tea.'

Bunny would have been a little surprised at Jimmy's behaviour after his departure. In his mind's eye he conjured up a picture of his victim in a state of limp mortification at his defeat—a picture which he drew in lurid colours for the amusement of the delighted Ellis minor. As a matter of fact, the victim sat back in his armchair and rippled with silent laughter. He was aware, but Bunny was not, of one important circumstance. On the following Friday the election was to be made to the headmastership for which Mr. Baker was a candidate.

For the rest of the week Bunny revelled in the sweets of victory. After a fortnight of *satisfecit*, a period of absolute and entire idleness came to him with an added pleasure, and he made use of his opportunity to the uttermost. To go into form in a state of complete ignorance and without the slightest feeling of apprehension as to the consequences was a sensation which struck him as particularly suitable to the end of the summer term. Ellis minor, as the contriver of his happiness, he rewarded with gratitude and ices, and the two conspirators exchanged smiles of delight when Jimmy nursed Bunny carefully through the difficulties of translation, or suggested the answers to even the easiest of questions. Those glances of satisfaction were, it may be added, not entirely thrown away on Mr. Baker. The only regret which Bunny felt was that Ellis minor could not be present to see him exact his *satisfecit* every evening with an easy air of contemptuous triumph.

Friday night came, and with it came a telegram to Mr. Baker. It announced his election to the headmastership, and Bunny, as he peacefully penned a story, or chatted with Ellis minor over the prospect of 'jumping a bit more on Old Jimmy to-morrow afternoon,' was unconscious that one of his form-master's first remarks to himself on hearing of his election was, 'I must not forget to buy it to-morrow morning.' Next to his satisfaction at imparting the news to Miss Urquhart herself, he looked forward to the joy of breaking them to her brother.

'Well, Urquhart,' he began genially, as his tormentor strolled in on Saturday, 'come to have another chat with me about our difficulties, eh?'

'Yes, Mr. Baker,' the small boy answered languidly; 'I came to hear what you thought of doing.'

'I notice,' Mr. Baker said with the same geniality, 'that you don't trouble to call me "sir," but, of course, now you're not speaking to me as a master.'

'No,' Bunny said, 'I think it's better to drop all that kind of rot.'

'I fully agree with you, Urquhart, fully,' the master answered. 'I am quite ready to talk with you as man to man, eh? That's to be the arrangement, isn't it?'

'Yes,' Bunny said loftily. 'It's always better to talk to a fellow as if he wasn't a servant, you know.'

'And what do you expect me to do, Urquhart?' Jimmy asked.

'I suppose,' Bunny suggested, 'you'll drop the *satisfecits* altogether now. They seem to me scarcely necessary.'

'Do they?' Mr. Baker replied, with a marked change of manner. 'I don't agree with you, and what I am going to do is to give you the soundest thrashing you ever had in your life.'

Bunny started as if he had been shot.

'I said,' Mr. Baker said menacingly, 'that I was going to give you the soundest thrashing you ever had in your life. Did you hear me?'

'You can't; you've no right to,' Bunny stammered.

'I have no right as a master, Mr. Urquhart, but as man to man—as man to boy.'

Bunny began to turn pale.

'Under the circumstances, Mr. Urquhart, you can fight if you choose, you know, but I shouldn't advise you to. I think, perhaps, it wouldn't hurt quite so much if you took it in the usual position.'

'I'll take jolly good care that Maude will never speak to you again,' Bunny burst out desperately.

'I am inclined to doubt that, Mr. Urquhart,' the master said. 'I discussed the question of this little operation with her to-day, and she particularly asked me to add a few of the very best as her contribution.'

Bunny winced and made one last attempt.

'I want to appeal to the headmaster,' a right which is generally a prerogative of the Wellborough boy.

'Not the least use, my dear Mr. Urquhart, not the least. I

have already discussed this with him, and he agrees with me that it is entirely a matter to be settled between ourselves. I think we might as well get to business now.'

He went over to his cupboard and produced a cane of the lithe springy kind which Bunny was aware by experience produced the most salutary results.

'A good one, isn't it?' Mr. Baker said gleefully, as he made it whistle through the air. 'I bought it specially for you to-day. I was a little divided between this and a thicker one. Your sister preferred the thicker one, but I told her it's possible to do better work with one of these.'

'My father——' Bunny burst out.

'You can tell your father, mother, aunts, and nurse afterwards, Mr. Urquhart—afterwards. I should be obliged if you would kindly kneel over that chair.'

Bunny sheepishly rose and knelt on the place of execution. The cane whistled through the air as Mr. Baker made a few preliminary passes, and Bunny waited for the blow. A minute passed, then another, and no blow came. There was a silent pause for the space of some five minutes, and then Bunny looked round to see what had happened. What met his eyes was Mr. Baker standing in fits of silent laughter, with his hands in his pockets and the cane gone from view.

'Who's got the laugh on his side now, Mr. Urquhart?' Old Jimmy inquired. 'What do you think as man to man?'

'Aren't you going to cane me then?' Bunny asked with a gasp of astonishment.

'Much as you deserve it, I am not,' Mr. Baker said. 'You see, in a month or two you'll probably be my brother-in-law, and it would scarcely do to step into the family over your semi-recumbent form.'

Bunny stood looking shamefacedly at him, and the tears began to gather for the first time in his eyes.

'Urquhart,' the master asked, 'do you think you behaved exactly nicely to your sister—not to mention me?'

Bunny's emotions under the reaction began to grow almost too much for him.

'There, there, Urquhart,' Jimmy said in a more kindly tone, 'let's say no more about it—except this. I may be wrong, but from one or two things I've noticed I don't think you're entirely responsible for what you've done; and if you would kindly punch

the head of the *fons et origo mali*, it might give satisfaction to both of us. Now let's have some tea. I believe I made some other purchases this morning.'

When Bunny emerged from the room an hour or so afterwards, his opinion of Jimmy was entirely changed. He summed him up as a jolly good sort, and was ready to receive him as a man and a brother-in-law, and this, though he was again on *satisfecit* of a real kind.

There were only two persons who really regretted such an end to the episode. One was Ellis minor, whose head was severely and ungratefully punched. The other was Miss Urquhart, who maintained that Bunny ought to have been thoroughly and mercilessly flayed.

HENRY MARTLEY.

## HUMOURS OF BIRD LIFE.

BY LADY BROOME.

'Birds in their little nests agree.'

DR. WATTS, though doubtless an excellent and estimable divine, must have had but little experience of the ways and manners of birds when he wrote this oft-quoted line. Birds are really the most quarrelsome and pugnacious creatures amongst themselves, though they are capable of great affection and amiability towards the human beings who befriend them.

I have always been a passionate bird-lover, and have had opportunities of keeping, in what I hope and believe has been a comfortable captivity, many and various kinds of birds in different lands. My first experience of an aviary on a large and luxurious scale was in Mauritius, many years ago, and was brought about by the gift of a magnificent and enormous cage, elaborately carved by Arab workmen. It was more like a small temple than anything else. But the first steps to be taken were to make it, so to speak, bird-proof, for the ambitious architect had left many openings in his various minarets and turrets, through which birds could easily have escaped.

Regarded as a cage it was not a success, for it was really difficult to see the birds through the profuse ornamentation of the panelled sides. However, I stood it in a wide and sunny verandah, and proceeded to instal the birds I already possessed in this splendid dwelling. I had brought some beautiful little blue and fawn-coloured finches from Madeira, and I had a few canaries. Gifts of other birds soon arrived from all quarters; a sort of half-bred canary from Aden—there were a dozen of those—and many pretty little local birds. I made them as happy as I could with endless baths, and gave them, besides the ordinary bird seed, bunches of native grasses, and even weeds in blossom, which they greedily ate. The little Aden birds would not look at water for bathing purposes. They came from a 'dry and thirsty land, where no water is,' and evidently regarded it as a precious beverage to be kept for drinking. They had to be accommodated with little heaps of finely powdered earth, in which they disported themselves bath-fashion, to the deep amazement of the other birds.

But how those birds quarrelled! At roosting-time they all seemed to want one particular spot on one particular perch, and nothing else would do. All day long they quarrelled over their baths and their food, and the only advantage of the ample space they enjoyed was to give them more room to chevy each other about. They all insisted on using one especial bath at the same moment, and would not look at any other, though all the baths were exactly alike. One fine day a batch of tiny parrakeets from a neighbouring island arrived, and I congratulated myself on having at last acquired some amiable members of my bird community. Such gentle creatures were never seen. With their pale-green plumage and the little grey-hooded heads which easily explained their name of 'capuchin,' they made themselves quite happy in one of the many domes or cupolas of the Arab cage. In a few days, however, a mysterious ailment broke out among all the other birds. Nearly every bird seemed suddenly to prefer going about on one leg. This did not surprise me very much at first, as the mosquitoes used to bite their little legs cruelly, and I was always contriving net curtains, &c., to keep these pests out. At last it dawned on me that many of the canaries had actually only one leg. An hour's careful watching showed me a parrakeet sidling up to a canary, and after feigning to be deeply absorbed in its own toilet, preening each gay wing-feather most carefully, the little wretch would give a sudden swift nip at the slender leg of its neighbour, and absolutely bite it off then and there. Of course I immediately turned the capuchins out of the cage with much obloquy, but too late to save several of my poor little pets from a one-legged existence.

I had also several parrots and cockatoos, but they had to be kept as much as possible out of earshot, for their eldritch yells and shrieks were too great an addition to the burden of daily life in a tropic land.

There was one little grey and red parrot, however, from the West Coast of Africa, which was different from the ordinary screaming green and yellow parrot. This was certainly the cleverest little creature of its kind I have ever seen. Dingy and shabby as to plumage, and with a twisted leg, its powers of mimicry were unsurpassed. It picked up everything it heard directly, and my only regret was that it appeared to forget its phrases very quickly. Before it had been two days in the house it took me in half a dozen times by imitating exactly the impatient peck at a glass door of

some tame peacocks, who always invited themselves to 'five o'clock-er.' I used to go to the door and open it; of course to find no peacocks there, for they were punctuality itself, and never came near the house at any other time. After the pecks—exactly reproduced as if on glass—came an impatient note, followed by the exact cry of an indignant peacock. I believe that grey parrot had the utmost contempt for my mental powers, and delighted in victimising me.

I was a constant sufferer in those days from malarial fever, and when convalescent and comfortably settled on my sofa in the drawing-room, the parrot would first gently cough once or twice, then sigh, and finally, in a weak voice, call 'Garde, Garde.' This was to a functionary who lived in the deep verandahs, and whose mission in life seemed to be the regulating of the heavy outside blinds made of split bamboo. The next sound would be the awkward shuffling of heavy boots (for the 'Garde' usually went barefoot, except when in uniform and on duty), followed by 'Madame.' Then my voice again, 'Levez le rideau.' 'Bien, Grande Madame.' Then you heard the creak of the pulleys as the curtain was raised, followed by the Garde's tramping away again, all exactly imitated.

The A.D.C.'s way of calling his 'boy' (generally a middle-aged man) was also faithfully rendered, beginning in a very mild and amiable voice, rising louder as no 'boy' answered, and finally a stentorian 'boy' produced a very-frightened and hurried 'Ci, Monsieur le Capitaine, ci.' I grieve to say this performance generally ended with a confused and shuffling sound as of a scrimmage.

There used also to be an orderly on duty outside the Governor's office, who, once upon a time, was afflicted with a violent cold in his head. This malady, and his primitive methods of dealing with it, made him a very unpleasant neighbour, so his Excellency requested the Private Secretary to ask for another orderly *without* a cold in his head. Of course this was immediately done, and the desired change made, but not before Miss Polly had taken notes. Next day I was startled by the most violent outburst of sneezing and coughing in the verandah, followed by other trying sounds. I next heard a plaintive and deeply injured voice from the Governor's office—it must be remembered that every door and window is always wide open in a tropic house.

'I thought I asked for that man to be changed.'

This brought the Private Secretary hurriedly out of his room, to be confronted by a small grey parrot, who wound up the performance by a sort of sob of exhaustion, and 'Ah! mon Dieu!' the real orderly standing by, looking as if he was considering whether or no he ought to arrest the culprit.

One likes to have parrots walking about quite tame, free and unfettered, but it is an impossibility if a garden or any plants are within reach, for the temptation to go round and nip off every leaf and blossom, and even stem, seems irresistible to a parrot or a cockatoo.

Soon after I went to Western Australia, in 1883, I was given a pair of beautiful cockatoos called by the natives 'Jokolokals.' They did not talk at all, but were lovely to look at, and as they had never been kept in a cage and were reared from the nest, they were perfectly tame and their plumage most beautiful, of a soft creamy white, with crest and wing-lining of an indescribable flame tint. I never saw such exquisite colouring, and they looked charming on the grass terraces during the day, and for a while roosted peaceably in a low tree at night.

But one morning, early, I was told the head gardener wished to speak to me, and he was with difficulty induced to postpone the interview until after breakfast. I tremble to think what the expression of that grim Scotch countenance would have been at first! It was quite severe enough when I had to confront him a couple of hours later. The Jokolokals had employed a long bright moonlight night in gardening among the plants with which the many angles and corners of the wide verandahs were filled, and such utter ruin as they had wrought, especially among the camellias! Not only had every blossom been nipped off, but they had actually gnawed the stems through, and few pots presented more than an inch or two of stalk to my horrified eyes. After that—on the principle of the steed and the stable-door—the beautiful villains were put in a large aviary out of doors, and revenged themselves by awaking me every morning at daylight by fiendish yells. The gardener's cottage was out of earshot.

I had also a very large cage of canaries, in which they lived and multiplied exceedingly. In a country where there are no song-birds a canary is much prized, and every year I gave away a great many young birds. There was also another large cage with small (and very quarrelsome) finches, including many brilliant Gouldian finches from the North-west (they call them

Painted finches there), a tiny zebra-marked finch, and many different little birds kindly brought to me from Singapore and other places.

However, to return for a moment to the cockatoos. The large white Albany cockatoo, which has a very curved beak and wide pale-blue wattles round the eye, talks admirably, and is easily tamed if taken young. In spite of its ferocious beak it is really quite gentle, and mine—for I had several—were only too affectionate, insisting on more petting and notice than I always had time to bestow.

There were often garden-parties in the lovely grounds of the Government House at Perth, and at one of the later ones some of my guests came to me complaining, as it were, of the weird utterances of the Albany cockatoo, who lived with other parrots in a kind of wire pagoda among the vines. 'What does he say?' I asked laughingly. 'He wants to know if we like birds,' was the answer. So I immediately went down to the cage, and was at once asked by the cockatoo in a very earnest voice, 'Do you like birds?' Alas for the want of originality in the human race! He had heard exactly that remark made by every couple who came up to the cage, and had adopted it. My little son taught that bird to call me 'Mother,' and it never used the word to any one else. If I ever passed the cage without stopping to play with or pet the cockatoos, I was greeted with indignant cries of 'Mother,' which generally brought me back, and the moment I opened the door the big cockatoo would throw himself on his back on the gravel floor, that I might put the point of my shoe on his breast and rub his back up and down the gravel. I never could understand why they all loved that mode of petting.

But the Australian magpie is one of the most delightful pets, and can be trusted to walk about loose, as he does not garden. 'Break-of-day-boys' is their local name, and it fits them admirably. At earliest dawn only do you hear the sweet clear whistle which is their native note. They learn to whistle tunes easily and correctly, but nothing can be compared to their own note. They are exactly like the English magpie in appearance, only a little larger. I had a very tame one, which had been taught to lie on its back on a plate with its legs held stiffly up as if it were dead. I have a photograph of it in that attitude, and no one will believe me when I assure them the bird was alive; not even its open and roguish eye will convince them. I only wish the

sceptics had been by when I clapped my hands to signify that the performance was over, and Mag jumped up like a flash of lightning and made for the nearest human foot, into the instep of which she would dig her bill viciously. It must have been her idea of revenge, for she never did so at any other time; and she scattered the spectators pretty swiftly, I assure you.

Dear, clever Mag was lost or stolen just before we left Perth. I intended to have brought her to England, but one morning I was informed by the sentry that he could not see her anywhere, and she always kept near him. Further and anxious inquiries elicited that she had been observed following a newspaper boy near the back-gate. The police were communicated with, and the result was my being confronted at all hours of the day and night by an indignant and rumpled magpie tied up in a pocket-handkerchief, who loudly protested that we were absolute strangers to each other. And so we were, for among the numerous arrests made of suspicious characters among magpies, not one turned out to be my poor Maggie.

But I must not loiter too long over my West Australian aviary, in spite of the great temptation to dwell on those dear distant days. I brought a small travelling cage of Gouldian and other lovely finches from the neighbourhood of Cambridge Gulf home with me. What I suffered with that cage during a storm in the Bay of Biscay no tongue can tell. However, they all reached London in safety, and in due time were taken out—also with great personal trouble and difficulty—to Trinidad. Here they were luxuriously established in four large wired compartments over the great porch of Government House. No birds could have been happier. The finches had one compartment all to themselves, so had the canaries; whilst the laughing jackass, another Australian magpie, and a beautiful Indian hill mynah occupied a third compartment, the fourth being brilliantly filled by troupials, morichés, and sewing crows from Venezuela, besides many lovely local birds of exquisite plumage.

In each compartment stood large boxes and tubs filled with growing shrubs, whilst creepers, brought up from the luxuriant growth at the pillars below, were twined in the fine meshes of the netting. Of course there were perches and nests, all sizes and at differing heights. It was really one man's business to attend to them, but they were beautifully kept. Every morning the grass-cutter brought in a large bunch of the waving plume-like seed of

the tall guinea grass; and they had plenty of fresh fruit, in which they greatly delighted. Of course they quarrelled over it all, and a fierce battle would rage over half an orange, of which the other half was utterly neglected.

The canaries led a commonplace existence and had only one adventure. I had noticed that for some few weeks past the numbers of these little birds seemed rather to diminish than increase at their usual rapid rate. But I saw so many hens sitting on nests very high up that I accounted for the small number in that way. However, one day a perch fell down, and the black attendant went into the cage with a tall ladder to replace it. Presently I heard a great scrimmage and many 'Hi, my king,' and other agitated ejaculations, which soon brought me to the spot. It was indeed no wonder that my poor little birds had been disappearing mysteriously, for there was a large, well-fed, but harmless snake. It must have got in through the mesh when quite young and small, but had now grown to such stout proportions that escape through the wire netting—which would only admit the very tip of my fourth finger—was impossible, and it was easily slain. The snake was found coiled up on a ledge too high up to be easily perceived from below.

Soon after that episode the little finches underwent a sad and startling experience. One morning the coachman brought me in a beautiful little bird of brilliant plumage which I had never seen before. It had been caught in the saddle-room, and was certainly a lovely creature, though unusually wild and terrified. However, I was so accustomed to new arrivals soon making themselves perfectly at home and becoming quite tame, that I turned the splendid stranger into the finches' compartment with no misgivings, and went away, leaving them to make friends, as I hoped. About half an hour later I passed the tall French window, carefully netted in, which opened on the corridor, and through which I could always watch my little pets unperceived. My attention was attracted by two or three curious little feathered lumps on the gravelled floor. On closer examination these proved to be the heads of some of my especial favourites, which the new arrival (a member of the Shrike family, as I discovered too late) had hastily twisted off. Besides these murders he had found time to go round the nests and turn out all the eggs and young birds. My dismay and horror may be imagined, but I could not stop, for luncheon and guests were waiting. I hastily begged a tall Irish

orderly who was on duty in the hall to catch the new comer and let him go. Now this man loved my birds quite as much as I did, and seemed to spend all his leisure-time in foraging for them. They owed him many tit-bits in the shape of wasps' larvae or the nursery of an ants' nest nicely stocked, or some delicacy of that sort. There was only time for a hurried order, received in grim silence, but when I was once more free and able to inquire how matters had been settled, all I could get out of O'Callaghan was: 'I've larned him to wring little birds' necks.'

'Did you catch him easily?' I inquired.

'Quite easily, my lady, and I larned him.' This in a voice trembling with rage.

'What have you done to him?' No answer at first, only a murmur.

'But I want to know what has happened to that bird,' I persisted.

'Well, my lady, I've larned him'—a pause; 'I've wrunged his neck.'

So this rough and ready justice had been meted out to the wrong-doer very speedily.

Perhaps of all my birds the one I called the Sewing Crow was the most amusing. It was a glossy black bird about the size of a thrush, with pale-yellow tail and wing-feathers, and curious light blue eyes with very blue rims. It was brought from Venezuela, and its local Spanish name means 'The Rice-bird,' but it never specially affected rice as food, preferring fruit and mealworms. I had several of these crows, but one was particularly tame, and rambled about the house seeking for sewing materials. I found it once or twice *inside* a large workbag full of crewels, where it had gone in search of gay threads, with which it used to decorate the wire walls of an empty cage kept in the verandah outside my own sitting-room. The extraordinary patience and ingenuity of that bird in passing the wool through the meshes of the wire can hardly be described. I suppose it was a reminiscence of nest-building, because it always worked harder in the springtime. It had a great friend in a little 'moriché,' black and yellow also, but of a more slender build, and with a very sweet whistle. The 'moriché,' too, was perfectly tame and flew all about the house, and it was very comic to watch its efforts at learning embroidery from its friend. It arrived at last at some sort of cage decoration, but quite different from that of the crow, who evidently dis-

approved of it, and often ruthlessly pulled the work of a laborious morning on the 'moriché's' part to pieces. Now the 'moriché' knew better than to touch the crow's work, though he often appeared to carefully examine it.

One day the crow must have persuaded the moriché to help him to roll and drag a reel of coarse white cotton from the corridor of the workroom, across the floor of my sitting-room, into the verandah. I saw them doing this more than once, and had unintentionally interfered with the crow's plans by picking up the reel and returning it to the maid's work-basket. However, one afternoon the crow got rid of me entirely, and on my return from a long expedition I found both the crow and moriché just going to roost in the empty cage, which was really only kept there for them to play in. I then perceived what the reel of cotton, which was again lying on the verandah floor, had been wanted for. The crow had sewn a straw armchair with an open-patterned seat securely to the cage by nine very long strands, and was sleepily contemplating the work with great satisfaction. It was quite easy to see how it had been managed once a start was made with the cotton; but it must have entailed a great deal of flying in and out with the end of the cotton, for it had not been broken off. Of course I left the chair in its place, and it remained untouched for some months; but I always had to use it myself, lest any one should move it too roughly, and so break the connecting strands which had cost my little bird so much labour and trouble.

The most popular of my birds, however, was certainly the laughing jackass, who dwelt in company with the magpie and the mynah. Unhappily a misunderstanding arose, when I was away in England, between these two birds, once such great friends. If I had only been there to adjust the quarrel, all might have gone well; but the magpie, after many days of incessant battle, I was told, fell upon the mynah and killed it. It was curious that they should have lived together for a couple of years without more than the ordinary share of bird-quarrels. I do not know what active share the jackass took in this affair, for he had a bad expression of eye, and I always doubted his intentions towards that mynah; but as he was very slow and cumbrous of movement I thought the mynah could well take care of himself. The only time the laughing jackass ever showed agility was when a mouse-trap with a live mouse in it was taken into his cage. With every feather bristling he would watch for the door of the trap to be

opened, when he pounced on the darting mouse quicker than the eye could follow, and killed and swallowed it with the greatest rapidity. Once a mouse escaped him, and the magpie caught it instead, and a more absurd sight could not be imagined than the magpie flitting from perch to perch, holding the mouse securely in his beak, through which he was at the same time trying hard to whistle; whilst the jackass lumbered heavily after him, remonstrating loudly, for the magpie did not want to eat the mouse, and he did.

It always amused me to see the jackass take his bath, though it was rather a rare performance, whereas all the other birds tubbed incessantly. I had a large tin basin full of water placed just beneath one of the lowest perches, and when the jackass intended to bathe he descended cautiously to this perch and eyed the water for some time, uttering—with head well thrown back—his melancholy laugh. As soon as his courage was equal to it he suddenly flopped into the water, as if by accident, and then scrambled hastily out again. After repeating these dips many times he seemed to think he had done all that was necessary in the washing line, and scrambled up to a sunny corner where he could dry and preen his beautiful plumage.

Yes, my birds were the greatest delight and amusement to me for many years, and I had nearly a hundred of them when my happy life in that beautiful tropical home came to an abrupt end two years ago. Many of my friends have often asked me if I did not regret leaving my birds; but as I left everything that the world could hold for me in the way of happiness and interest and work behind me at the same time, the loss of the birds did not make itself felt just then. I miss them more now than I did at first, but I believe they have nearly all found kind and happy homes, where they are cherished a little for my sake as well as for their own, the dear things!

LITTLE ANNA MARK.<sup>1</sup>

BY S. R. CROCKETT.

## CHAPTER I.

## I MEET MY FATHER.

'COME in hither, joe Janet ! Here you will see at one eye-blink the whole cursed pack kennelled, the lying priest that slandered me, the fatted English calf whose advice disherited me, and the gap-toothed old hound that begat me—and did me other dis-services beside !'

These are the first words that ever I remember hearing my father speak—clearly, that is, for I must have both seen and heard him often enough in my innocence before I grew word-conscious.<sup>2</sup>

I can recall the scene yet as clear in my mind's eye—ay, clearer than the dinner I have this day eaten or the pattern on the laced-silk waistcoat which lies folded in the drawer at my elbow.

It was in the wide kitchen or house-place of James Brydson's change-house or common wayside inn, which sits on the brae overlooking the little Scottish town of New Milns. A low door it had, to enter which your head had to bow and your feet simultaneously to descend till, with a crick and double twist of the spine, presently you found yourself within, and after the sunshine blinking and sneezing in the bluish smother of the peat reek that billowed and bellied between you and the thatch. But Brydson's inn was mostly frequented by weavers, and they had bowed backs anyway. So its peculiarity of access mattered little, though now and then a gentleman or hill-farmer broke his head on the crossbeam of the porch.

I remember I was sitting on a creepie stool by the peat fire warming my feet at the red glow and admiring the glinting of

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1898, by S. R. Crockett, in the United States of America.

<sup>2</sup> Of the truth of this part of Philip Stansfield's strange narrative any reader may assure himself by turning to the 'State Trials.' A part of the history has already been adverted to by the present transcriber in the first volume of *Chapman's Magazine*, p. 128 seq.

the little flames on my new silver shoe-buckles. I had gone thither from the Lodge Yett, which was my mother's dwelling, holding my grandfather's hand. As I went my feet had hardly touched the ground, so firm a hold he took of my wrist, and such long strides as he conquered the ground withal. Sir James Stansfield of New Milns, he was called—a fine, upstanding, well-regarded man as any in that country, reverend of demeanour, gracious of speech, and exceeding seemly to the eye with his broad-brimmed hat, wide-skirted coat of fine blue cloth, white silk undercoat, white stockings, and the silver-buckled shoes that were copies in great of mine. There was no finer gentleman in all the south-lands of Scotland than my grandfather.

He seemed at once to enoble and to illuminate that smoky little hostelry, as he sat in the high-backed elbow-chair and tapped the bare boards lightly with his glove tips. With him were Mr. John Bell, preacher of the Gospel, in whose discourse my grandfather sometimes delighted (at other times he would laugh heartily at his simplicity), and Umphray Spurway, the cloth manufacturer—a great red Englishman from Yorkshire, at whose laugh you seemed to see the rafters dirl as he threw back his head and blattered applause with his palm on the white scoured deal of the inn table.

To these three gentlemen sitting thus at their wine in the change-house kitchen of New Milns that snowy December night in the year of our Lord's grace 169—there entered a fourth, and with him presently a fifth, at sight of whom silence fell upon the men and constraint upon the women folk. James Brydson, the landlord, was out upon his occasions, and I mind nothing of him. But Mistress Brydson, the landlady, sat in the corner by a flickering cruisie lamp knitting at a grey rig-and-fur stocking as deftly and silently as a spider spinning a web across a window-pane ; and, smiling goodhumouredly all the while, she glanced up and caught the eye of this one and that among her guests—proud, I ween, that Sir James himself did not disdain to leave his great furnished house to sit with his guests in her kitchen. A proud woman, as all might see, was Lucky Brydson that night, smiling and becking at her ease as the white bone knitting pins clicked and twinkled in the cross lights. Shyly and at times slyly whispering, nodding, and confiding seccrecies to each other as girls will, her two daughters Elspie and Margit stood by the door of the inner room, where the entrance to the cellar was. I suppose they were bonny enough,

rosy-cheeked wenches. I was not yet of an age to note or care. But this I know, that Elspie was kind to me, and often gave me fine farles of cake with honey in the comb spread thereon liberally. I had no fault to find with Elspeth Brydson that night or any night, but sat composedly munching my piece and dusting the crumblings from my hosen, lest, when I returned to New Milns, my grannie's eye should note that I had been eating between meals; a heinous sin in the stern Decalogue of the Lady Griselda Stansfield, which must indeed have been written upon two tables of stone.

The talk had been brisk and merry all the evening, and such of it as I can remember now goes to show how debonair and kind my grandfather could be when he escaped from his wife's leading-strings for an hour, unbinding his wits and ungirding his waistband in a place where mirth was not counted ungodliness and laughter compared (with trite asperity) to the crackling of thorns under a pot.

'Ha, Elspie, lass,' he had cried when he came in, crooking a finger to the elder maid by the inner door, 'come hither to my knee. Nay, what, never bashful? Why, 'tis but yesterday that you would have run to it and climbed for kisses. And to-day you are as welcome—every whit!'

Whereat right heartily Umphray Spurway the Englishman laughed, but not so the minister, Mr. John Bell.

The girl came slowly forward, lifting the corner of her white apron with one hand and picking blushfully at it with the other.

Sir James lifted one of the tall candlesticks and held it up, so that its light fell on the perturbed face and shrinking figure of this tall slip of a lass.

'Ods fish!' he cried, 'this will never do. I must go find a match for you, my lady. You grow overly handsome. We will have heads cracked, and all the young gamecocks of the neighbourhood tearing at each other's combs, for your sake. I am a magistrate, and I will not have the lads quarrelling in my parish if I can help it. Mistress Brydson must have this pretty Elspeth of yours shackled and handcuffed ere she begin to breed ill-blood among our youth.'

The girl tossed her head and bridled like a wilful country beauty.

'I desire not to be wedded,' she said, biting at a strand of her

flowing dark hair, as if she had a spite at it ; 'it is a poor business ; besides—'

'Bravo ! Well said, my lass,' said the Englishman, smiting his knee ; "'tis an opinion I have always held myself.'

'Hush, Umphray ! Besides what, Elspie ?' persisted Sir James, wishing to hear how the lass would finish her sentence.

'Besides,' she hesitated, 'there are many wed who would give all they possess to be unwed again. I want not to make one more.'

Sir James laughed outright, while his two friends discreetly looked hard at the table.

'A shrewd lass, faith !' he said, 'very true—very true. I know some such myself. But all the same it is not well becoming in my jurisdiction that such a pretty one should lack an husband, so long as Umphray Spurway, great English lout that he is, hath neither wife to keep him warm a-nights nor bairn to heir his goods and go clad in good grey cloth of his weaving. Look to it, man ! Look to it !'

At this the great red Englishman laughed, being well pleased, as all men do when they are rallied concerning women.

'Ah, Sir James,' he said, speaking with a curious burr in his utterance, 'had I lands and houses, miln dues and water powers like you, I had not so long been eating the bread of an hireling's baking. Elspie here is a pretty lass and an honest, but I wot well she knows her value far too well to have aught to say to an old greybeard Englishman !'

By this the lass had recovered from her first daunting and found the sharp tongue wherewith to hold her own which comes naturally to women bred and born in inns and hostelries.

'Never before have I gotten the chance to say either yea or nay to that, Master Umphray Spurway,' she said, dropping her pinafore and standing with her hands behind her a little defiantly ; 'but, after all, "'tis better late than after dark," as the saying is !'

Sir James laughed loud and hearty, and even the minister chuckled over his cup of wine.

'There you have it to the hilt, Umphray,' cried Sir James. "'Tis a fair challenge. Speer her, man. We will be your witnesses, bonny lass !'

'And by mine office I will wed you here across the table if you get him to agree !' added the minister, speaking for the first time.

Umphray Spurway made an attempt to recover himself. He

laid down the small brown-bowled witch's pipe he had been contentedly smoking.

'Well, my lass,' he said, 'listen to me. Tell us whether you would prefer to have me or my 'prentice William Bowman, with whom I saw you so canty at the gable-end to-day. He is a limber lad and likely of his face.'

'Mean you for a husband or for a lad to court me?' queried the girl, as prompt as an echo at the wood's edge.

'For a husband of course,' quoth Sir James before the other could reply.

'Then I choose Umphray Spurway, the cloth merchant!' cried Elspie Brydson. 'Lads' bonny faces make maidens' bare down-sittings!'

'A wise lass—remarkable,' mused Sir James, nodding slyly to the company at large. Then turning to the Englishman he went on like one giving good and welcome advice: 'I do not think that ye could do better, Umphray. Think of it, man!'

And it was while the cloth-weaver hummed and hawed and shifted his legs first over one knee and then over the other, thumbing the dottle all the time into the bowl of his pipe, that I first heard my father's words, as I have reported them at the beginning.

'Come you ways in here, my joe Janet!'

I saw a tall swart-visaged man standing erect by the outer door and reaching back a hand to one who stood without on the steps half bowed to enter, yet still reluctant to descend. Philip Stansfield was of a fiery visage with eyes a little bloodshot, his cheeks mottled like day-old butcher's meat on a stall, and all his gay clothing tashed and frayed at sleeve-cuff and braiding. Yet through all disguises it was the face my mother looked at every night when she rose, sobbing, from saying her prayers and opened a little leathern miniature case which lay beside her Bible on the service stand of her bedroom. I had looked at it a thousand times when she was in the garden or gone up to the great house.

And though no one had ever told me, I knew that the man I looked upon was my father.

He stood on the threshold with a naturally gallant air, one hand on the hilt of his sword and the other, as I say, reached back to pull his companion within.

She came, shame-red and smirking, a smooth-faced, apple-cheeked youngish woman, slatternly, careless of dress, short of

skirt and lavish of shoulder, a blue ribbon cris-crossing loosely over her breast and only half holding her bodice together. This woman laughed a nervous fleering laugh when she found herself in face of the grave trio seated at the table, who turned with one accord to look at her. Yet a moment after she seemed to care nothing for them, and centred her disdainful attention upon the women on the other side of the inn kitchen. As I say, she was indeed very buxom and hoydenish of feature, but (this I learned afterwards) there was no steadfast or housewifely look in her eyes. And that, after all, is the way to tell a good woman.

The young man with the haughty air and handsome damaged countenance took his hand from his sword and pointed scornfully at the table.

'Look, Janet,' he cried, 'look well at them. There sit all the three. For a silver groat I would send them all to hell—aye, and swing for them in the Grass Mercat in the morning, Janet!'

The rosy mirth of the wine heat had ebbed quickly from my grandfather's lips. He gripped the table to steady himself—not that he was in the least overcome with fear or apprehension, but that he might worthily say that which he had to say.

'Philip,' he murmured, and then put his fingers to the goffered frill of his neckerchief, 'Philip, my lad, you are my eldest son. Will you not take warning and lead a new life? Gladly would I forgive you, for the sake of the bairn I learned to say his prayers kneeling at my knee. Put away this wicked, wanton woman that has made you live like a beast. Return to your wife. She greets for you. She prays for you. Look upon this bairn—'

My grandfather had now his hand upon my head, for I had run to him at the first sight of my father. He would have said more. I could hear his heart thumping in his side and his breath wheezing dryly in his throat. But at this moment the woman broke in shrill revilings, demanding furiously who he was thus to filch from her her good name.

'I would have you know that I am an honest man's wife!' She shouted the words at him like throwing stones.

Sir James's eyes were steady on her face.

'Said you by any chance,' he inquired gravely, '"a man's honest wife"?'

He dropped his words quietly as a fisher drops a bait into a pool.

At which the woman swore a horrid oath and turned away as if to escape the questioning eyes of those present. She even made as if to leave her companion's side and go over to the other side of the fireplace, where Mistress Brydson still sat, knitting with her daughters gathered in beside her like chickens when the hawk hovers. But the women folk of the house, readily divining her intent, gathered the skirts of their kirtles closely about them and swept off into the inner room. The door slammed in her face, and with a heartsick little laugh the woman returned to the side of her paramour. There was no such weakness in his attitude.

Philip Stansfield stood browbeating all that were in the inn kitchen, except perhaps Umphray Spurway, the Englishman, who sat sipping his stone ale contemptuously and smiling in a way that was a vast admiration to me to behold.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE LASSIE BAIRN.

THEN the minister man uprose and lifted his hand with a great appearance of solemnity, which made the Englishman cough behind his palm. For Master Bell began to exhort the young man and the woman to repent and put away their sin, citing instances of well-accredited reformations both from Scripture and (as he added) from the records of profane history.

But this timely and improving rebuke did the young man no good. Nay, it even made him more angry than before, for such is the hardness of the human heart.

‘Out upon you, canting hound !’ he cried, breaking in on the preacher's sermonising. ‘I tell you plainly that had I as muckle to fill my belly as a groat a day, I would never trouble my father again.’

‘Come this night only to the great house,’ continued Mr. Bell, ‘bide supper and to the worship of the family altar. Then will I beseech for you a new heart. I feel that for this very purpose I have been sent to New Milns from the wicked city of Edinburgh.’

‘The devil fly away with my father and you both—to Edinburgh if he will ! Think you I would frequent his table to have

him for ever girning at me like a sheep's head on the tongs? Ye dog in band-strings' (here he broke out in sudden fury as if he would have sprung upon him), 'what is your concern in the matter? Know you to whom ye speak?'

Philip Stansfield suddenly left the woman's side. He strode across to where I stood trembling at my grandfather's elbow, my fingers clutching his coat-sleeve.

'And so this puker is my son—the bantam that hath disinherited his own father. I will have no more folly. I will take him and he shall learn to chop wood and scour pots for them that really love me. He hath a face like a dish-clout, and, I doubt not, the spirit of a sheep maggot. I will train him better. Faith, we will see if the law of the land will deny a son to his own father.'

What would now have happened I know not, for at his son's threat Sir James sat still, and, as it were, bereft of speech. But Umphray Spurway, who up to this time had been listening with a smile on his lips, suddenly whipped a pair of pistols out of his pockets and laid them bended on the table before him.

'Enough and to spare of ill talk,' he said; 'out of this house with you on the instant, Philip Stansfield, you debauched man and blasphemer of your father!'

The young man was bold enough, but the pistols daunted him sorely, and with a shrill cry of fear his companion clasped his arm to draw him away.

'As for you, Janet Mark,' Spurway continued, speaking to the woman, 'you shall be whipped from here to Moreham—aye, if I have to lay on the lashes myself!'

At which, after a volley of oaths from Philip Stansfield and a snarling like that of a trapped wild beast from his companion, the pair went forth into the night, vowing vengeance upon us all.

The three gentlemen sat a long time silent without touching the wine which remained, nor so much as emptying their glasses. Then Umphray Spurway rose.

'Let us take the boy home to his mother,' he said. 'It was like him to think of my mother.'

And with that he handed one of the pistols to Sir James, reserving the other for himself. The minister placed himself next to my grandfather on the inner side, and commended his life and work to God in moving words. I thought he might have spared a prayer for my grandfather and me, but he did not.

In this order we were just about to go up the steps of Brydson's change-house and adventure forth into the night, when of a sudden before us there appeared the strangest little figure.

A lassie bairn stood at the door barring the way—a girl of six years or thereby. Her head was a fretful tangle of light brown curls, which the firelight netted with gold. Her eyes danced light. Her mouth smiled red. She herself seemed to smile and dance as if she could hardly keep her feet still. I thought she looked kindly and pretty and little more than a babe, but at sight of her the womenfolk of the house came running indignantly forward to thrust her forth.

‘My mither—where have ye put my mither?’ cried the child.

‘Oot o’ this, deil’s brat!’ they answered as with one voice, and would have driven her forth into the night with their hands but that she seemed to flit before them up the steps and to disappear in the darkness. After a moment’s hesitation Umphray Spurway followed, and we all found ourselves environed by the crisp silence of the winter’s night. I looked all about me for the little figure in the dress of red soldier’s blanket, but I saw her not. It was cold, and a stray pellet or two of hail spat in our faces. For the frost was too keen to let the snow come down with any freedom, though the sough of the wind from the north told us that it was not far away.

For several hundred yards beyond the circle of the yellow lights of the change-house windows the street of the village of New Milns is bounded by the kirkyard wall. As we passed along I think we all looked up apprehensively at it. And I for one felt certain all the while that Philip Stansfield’s gun-barrel would be peering down upon us from its long irregular ridge.

But what we made out was quite different. Again we saw the little girl. She stood erect upon it, just by the lintel of the gate-post, her blanket-swathed figure blotting out a slim belt of stars. Again we heard her voice speaking to us as she had done on the steps of the inn.

‘My mither! Ill men, what have ye done with my mither?’

‘Go home, little one,’ cried Sir James; ‘go home where you belong. ’Tis no seemly hour for a bairn to be sitting on the wall of the kirkyaird.’

‘I want my mither! I will not gang hame without my mither!’

The answer came down to us with a strange lilt to it as if the speaker were speaking and dancing too. Then after a pause—

‘And I’m no sittin’, I’m standin’. And I want my mither.’

‘We do not know your mither nor where she is,’ said Sir James. ‘Go home when you are bidden like a good lass. And if ye are feared to gang, tell your mither that I said ye were no to be lickit this time for bidin’ oot late.’

‘And wha are ye that bids folks to come and gang that gate?’ said the elf’s voice from the wall shrewdly.

‘I am Sir James Stansfield,’ answered my grandfather simply. Whereat from the kirk dyke came peal on peal of the strangest, merriest laughter, like bells on harness heard across the snow.

‘Why do you laugh at my name, bairn?’ my grandfather asked with a certain sternness.

The laugh stopped short as if cut off with shears.

‘Because my minnie<sup>1</sup> laughs like that when she lays oot your washin’,’ she answered.

‘Lays out my washing?’ said my grandfather uncertainly.

‘Aye,’ returned the child; ‘when my mither folds up the linen sheets she aye laughs when she comes to the hindmost one. “This is Sir James Stansfield’s winding sheet,” she says. And then she laughs. And so I laugh too, though I do not ken what for.’

And again there came the sound of elvish mirth from the top of the kirkyard wall. Then, all suddenly, the little dark figure disappeared, and the sound of her laughter tinkled away irregularly into the distance, coming back to us now clear, now faint, till it was heard no more. And looking through the bars of the kirk yett we could see her flitting like a snowflake across the tombstones towards the vault of the Stansfields.

I think I never felt my bonnet lift off my head more plainly than that night. Even the minister beside me was groaning and quaking.

‘Who is this devil’s bairn?’ he asked of Umphray Spurway. ‘I will have her indicted at the next Presbytery for a witch.’

‘Some chance bairn—the child of an evil mother,’ said my grandfather.

‘In my country,’ said Umphray Spurway dryly, ‘we would call her “God’s child.” That is little Anna Mark!’

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, mother.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE GREAT HOUSE OF NEW MILNS.

THAT night they took me not back to my mother's house, the Lodge Yett at the end of the avenue which leads to the south from the mansion house, my grandfather not wishing for reasons of his own to be parted from me. But when we came to the door of the great house of New Milns Sir James said to John Bell, the minister, 'Sir, I would ask you to go down to the Lodge and say to this lad's mother that he is to bide here this night, so that she may not expect him. Also bid Caleb Clinkberry, her manservant, make all fast and keep his musket loaded. Tell him this apart. He will know the reason why.'

Clearly the minister did not like his mission. Young as I was I could understand that, for the place was lonely and the road dark. But he feared my grandfather, as I think now, because he was the patron of several good parishes, and he as yet both unbeficed and expectant.

Then Sir James let himself in with a key which he took from a belt at his waist, and Umphray Spurway and I preceded him into the hall, a wide place where there were armour and old swords and a great brass-faced clock *tick-tacking* composedly in a corner. A lamp stood ready lighted, and the place smelt habitable and home-like. It was good to be once more within walls, though even now I could not get the thought of the witch child out of my head.

My grandfather's old serving man, Robin Green, came to take his master's overcoat, letting Umphray Spurway and myself shift for ourselves.

'Her ladyship has gone to bed,' he said; 'she wearied waiting for you.'

'Did she ken that I was at the change-house?' asked Sir James, a little anxiously as it seemed to me.

'I telled her leddyship that ye were ga'en wi' the minister to a meetin'. I condescended not on particulars either of time or place, necessity not being laid upon me.'

Sir James was visibly relieved.

'I will not forget this, Robin,' he said, making his wonted little grimace of pain as the servitor eased his coat over his rheumatic shoulder.

'There is a fire in your ain bedroom nevertheless,' said Robin ; 'her leddyship bade me say that she wished not to be disturbit.'

At this Sir James clapped his hands suddenly together as at good news.

'Come ben, Umphray ; come your ways ben !' he said heartily. 'Robin, put a fire in the parlour—not her ladyship's parlour, but the other.'

'There is a guid fire in the east room, sir,' answered the old man gravely, as if saying his prayers ; 'I lichtit it as soon as her leddyship gaed up to her bed. Also I took ben the guardevine and the—'

'Robin,' said my grandfather with equal gravity, 'your wages are raised a pound in the half-year.'

'I thank ye kindly, sir,' said the man, nodding with the same simple gravity.

'Tak' that bairn with ye, Robin,' added Sir James, his eye suddenly falling on me ; 'or, stay, let him have some supper in the parlour first, and then lay him in the Blue Room that is next to mine.'

At these words, glad to be rid of my grandfather for a little, I went gladly with Robin to his pantry. It had the word 'Still-room' printed legibly in large capital letters on the door, and smelt of cheese. Here Robin would not let me bide long, saying that it was cold and unfired ; but putting a tumbler of milk and a liberal wedge of game pastry upon a tray, he took my hand and led me back into the lighted parlour, which, like most of the rooms in the old house of New Milns, had old arras about the walls. The curtains were drawn close. The fire Robin Green had lighted was sparkling and spelking over the great iron dogs. Billets of birch were piled up beside it, and Sir James sat tossing first one and then another upon the heap absent-mindedly, talking all the while to the English cloth merchant.

As soon as Robin saw this he set down the tray on the table, and going over to his master, he took the billet of wood out of his hand and led him back to the table. Sir James looked at the birch faggot, then at the hand on his arm. The old servitor was at once firm and respectful. So without intermitting his discourse for a moment, my grandfather permitted himself to be led back to the table and installed opposite the great oaken guardevine, which, with its silver-capped square bottles, its shining ladles and rummers, looked most comfortable and appetising on a winter's night.

Then Robin Green went back to the hearth, and stooping over

the fire he carefully removed the entire armful of faggots which Sir James had tossed on, blowing out each if it had caught and laying it at the side, so that presently the whole room was full of the acrid bite of wood smoke, and the tears began to run down my cheeks into the very milk I was drinking.

But Sir James continued his story without stopping to notice Robin Green, and as he talked the tears ran down his cheeks also, but whether from the pity of the tale he was telling or because of the pungent wood-reek I know not.

My grandfather had compounded a steaming glassful for his guest and then one for himself; but so absorbed was he in his narrative that he quite forgot, at the end of the operation, to add the spirit to Umphray Spurway's glass—an omission which the Englishman immediately repaired without comment, reaching his hand for the decanter and pouring in the rich yellow liquid with a liberal hand, all the time looking Sir James in the eye and nodding at the proper places in the story, as if that were his sole concern.

My grandfather, after having bidden me haste and despatch my supper, because it was late and my mother would wish me in bed, presently forgot all about me, and proceeded with his argument. Still talking, he rose from his seat, and going to one of the shelves which went about the deep window-seat, he took from that which came readiest to his hand a little book covered in crimson leather, and with the pages grown yellow with age and handling.

‘This,’ he said, holding it up, ‘is now my chiefest comfort. No, Master Spurway, it is not the Bible. Her Ladyship—yes, certainly, she is a comfort, but of a mild nature, and, as one might say, occasional in action. But, sir, I would have you know that this is Burton his *Melancholy*, of the right octavo edition, before he grew clumsy. “At Oxford: Printed by John Lichfield and James Short for Henry Cripps. *Anno Dom. 1621.*” By that you may know it. Without this written cordial I could neither live merry hour, nor sleep quiet night. Having Burton's fellowship, even though my son strive after my death, I can go on merrily toward heaven, as indeed sayeth mine author.’

Then Umphray Spurway, with a curious smile on his face, asked my grandfather if it became him as an elder of the kirk to pass his time with this Burton—who, after all, was little better than a pagan (or at least an Episcopalian), when he might be in meditation

upon 'Naphtali' or 'Lex Rex'—or, if he minded not these, at the least casting up in his mind the points of Mr. John Bell's Sabbath sermon upon that choice and delectable passage in Canticles.

To which my grandfather replied that to his thinking there was more egg-meat in one page of honest Burton than in all the Songs of Solomon the King.

At which saying my own heart was troubled, and even Umphray Spurway covered his face with his hand.

'Wait, Umphray,' he went on, 'only wait, my nimble bachelor, till you are a man with a family and know something about the matter. What comfort will you find in a home that is one continual strife of tongues, your both sons waiting for you without your gate, wishful for your death, their teeth bared to bite, your very wife peevish of face, bitter of speech ?'

In answer to this outburst Umphray Spurway said no word, but held out his hand across the table, and after this he smiled no more behind his palm. Sir James took it and held it hard in both of his.

'I will not make a stranger of you, Umphray,' he said ; 'it is not debts that trouble me. You have put me out of the reach of that. It is that one of my sons hates me to the death. Ye have heard his best word of me this night. My second, to whom I had thought to leave the bulk of my money, now wellnigh every night comes home disguised in drink and rails upon me worse than the other. My wife cries out constantly that I have been well served for being so long over-lenient with the children.'

'Speaking of your son Philip,' said Umphray Spurway quietly, 'have you tried all ways with him—the severe as well as the indulgent ?'

'Aye,' answered my grandfather hopelessly, 'all ways. I sent him abroad to take service as a common soldier in the Scots Dutch regiments. I thought this would settle him. But in a month he was in prison ; and when, through the influence of our Ambassador at the Hague, I gat him released, in another month I have news that he has been condemned to death at Trèves. Then, when I had provided money to bribe his gaolers and bring him home, he only breaks out more and more furiously upon me, so that I never know when I go down to mine own dining-hall whether I will get the contents of a musket or a decent meal of meat into my wame !'

At this moment we heard a noise in the passage way, and

both of the gentlemen rose to their feet, my grandfather pale and perturbed, Umphray Spurway with his hand again in his coat pocket, where he had put his pistols.

But, after all, it was only the minister Mr. John Bell, who came in hastily and sank into a chair, all shaken and for the moment unable to speak.

‘What is’t? What is’t?’ said my grandfather, bending over him anxiously.

Umphray Spurway went to the door and looked down the passage. Then he came back and compounded a stout rummer of strong waters, the which when the minister had sipped at awhile, the power of speech returned to him, and he lifted up his hands to heaven and rolled his eyes.

‘Let the doors be barred, the windows looked to, for a man of blood goes about the house this night. Almost he had made an end of me, but mercifully his hand was withholden and I escaped like a bird out of the fowler’s snare.’

‘Speak plain, man,’ said my grandfather; ‘who or what molested you?’

The minister feebly waved a hand to intimate that he would speak more as strength was given to him, and presently with many fallings away and applications to the rummer, he began to tell his tale.

‘As I came back by the fir plantation, after leaving behind me the house of the Lodge, where I had delivered your message faithfully, I came upon Philip Stansfield in the way with a drawn sword in his hand.

‘“Dog!” he cried in a terrible voice, “down on your marrow-bones, dog! Ye have mumbled too many indulgences. Ye shall have none from me. Tell me what ye did in my wife’s house at this time of night. Oh nay, lie not to me. That will not serve you. I know the way of your cloth with female saints. Out with it, dog, or by the devil’s dice-box I will forthwith disembowel you with this sword !”

‘So, seeing him thus urgent, to keep the peace I gat down on my knees and told him all.’

‘“Bides Umphray Spurway at the Great House this night?” he asked me.

‘I told him that I knew not as to that, adding that I was a poor son of the Kirk, and that I looked to him to spare my life.

“What moneys have ye cozened from the old greyhound this week?” he cried. “Out with it! Empty your pockets!”

‘I told him that I had not on me the value of one doit, but that he was welcome to my poor prayers. At this he laughed a wicked ribald laugh: “Poor prayers indeed!” he said, spurning me painfully with his foot; “a coward’s prayers are poor prayers indeed! Rise up, brave saint! Go to your patron and bid him prepare for a longish journey. My service to the cloth-weaver. My humble filial duty to my honoured father!”

‘With that the young man laughed and went out of my sight with the naked sword yet over his shoulder, and so, rising up, I ran hither so soon as the blood came back to my heart!’

‘You hear, Umphray?’ said Sir James, looking across at the Englishman.

‘I will go seek Master Philip,’ said the man from Yorks, taking out his pistols and bending them in his hand.

Still do I remember that procession down the long passage to the outer door, my grandfather leading the way with a candle in a great silver candlestick. Then came Umphray the Englishman, his face grim and set, striding on with his heavy steadfast footfall. Behind him again were the minister and myself, fearful, I trow, to go, but still more fearful of being left in the parlour alone. I mind the shooting back of the bolts one by one, the whinging noise of the hinges, the widening of the black crack when the door opened and the night peeped in, the expectation in my heart that I should see the face of a fiend look in out of the blackness at us. Then I heard Umphray stride down the steps. My grandfather’s candle shone a moment on a stretch of white glistening snow over which the wind moaned. Then the heavy door clanged, the bolts were shot, and Sir James turned and found me at his feet.

He gave a little start at sight of me.

‘Philip,’ he said in a strange tone, ‘my little boy Philip!’

Then, with a long sigh, he added: ‘And now he seeks my life!’

In a little he recalled his mind from the past in which it had been wandering.

‘You must to bed instantly,’ he said; ‘there is a fire in the Blue Room. It is next to mine, so you will not be feared to be left alone. To-night you shall lodge there, and to-morrow—why, to-morrow we will send you back to your mother. Good night to you, Master Bell—this way, son Philip.’

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BLUE ROOM.

I CAN yet remember the feelings of awe with which I looked about me when my grandfather had left me alone in the Blue Room of the Great House of New Milns.

He took the candles with him lest I should set the place on fire. But he pointed to a pannier of faggots set by the side of the vast andirons on the hearth-stone.

'If you need light put a stick on the fire, one and no more,' he said.

Then for the first time in his life he stooped and kissed me.

'The Lord our God be a sun and shield to you, little man!' he said softly, as if to himself, and so went out.

It was with a strange quivering of the flesh and a creeping of the bones that I laid me down. There was no reason for it in the world, but certain it is that at the first glimpse I had conceived the strongest distaste of that quiet room caparisoned with blue, and with the same puff-cheeked hunter hunting the same wooden-antlered stag all about the walls.

I started to take off my clothes, but before I had gone far I stopped, listened, and then, hearing nothing, I ran to the bed in a fright, climbed up the broad flight of steps wide as those at the front of a mansion, all in a creeping tremor; and making a dive for it, I hid me, head and all, deep in the clothes and coverlets.

Here I was almost smothered before I dared cautiously to put out my head. The great bed in which I lay was like a tent. On either side, but much further off than I could reach with my hands, was a straight fall of blue hanging, lined with silk of a lighter hue, depending from the bar above, which was solid as a rafter. So I looked as it were down a blue tunnel out upon the flicker of the fire and the reflections of the dancing flames on the dull oak of the doorway.

And as I lay there I can mind a strange feeling coming upon me. Perhaps it grew out of the terrible things I had already heard and seen that night; perhaps out of the forlorn state of my mother, and the fact that never before had I slept away from her side. But as I lay there in the blue uncertain leme of the fire-light and listened to the thousand ticking noises in the wainscot, I

seemed to grow conscious of something that had happened in that same chamber. The whole story became clear to me, yet I can swear that I had never heard it from any nurse or servant—nor indeed so much as known that there was a Blue Room in the Great House of New Milns.

I thought I saw a young lady lying asleep in that same bed in which I couched. She lay on her side with her face turned like mine to the fireplace and away from the window. For a while that was all I knew. Then through the multitude of the night noises I was conscious that with a long steady push the window sill rose, rose, rose—till from the darkness without a man's head looked in. Well did I know that this was but my fantasy. Yet I dared not look or turn my head to certify myself.

Still (in my imagination) I saw the window rise till I could discern a man's leg clothed in a tight stocking of silk and above that baggy trunk-hose, thrown over the sill into the room. Then I saw, or rather knew, that the man had ducked his head under and was in the room.

Also I was aware—how I know not—that this man was a foreigner, an Italian, whom the young lady had married, but secretly for fear of her father. And now this man desired to be revenged on her, because, following her father's will, she had cast him off. I could see the dreadful smile with which he advanced upon the bed. He did not come to the foot of the bed, but went and stood behind the arras towards the head; then I could hear his hand twitching at the hangings, and the bed itself moved a little, I suppose with my own trembling. My tongue clave to my mouth's roof. I desired to cry out but could not.

There—there came the twitching again. The hangings moved aside. The man's cruel face looked in, his bold black eyes sparkling like those of a demon. In his hand was a stiletto with which, I well knew, he meant to stab the young lady to the heart. I saw him raise his hand till the point of the blade glittered beside his ear.

And with a cry I awoke, as it seemed to me, in time to see in the blue flicker of the dying flame a dark figure flit behind the tapestry to the left of the fireplace.

My heart was beating so loudly and at the same time so thickly that its vehemence seemed to suffocate me. The bedclothes pressed like so much lead upon me, and every hair on my scalp stood bristling up with terrible fear.

Yet I knew that I must have been dreaming. For there, quietly dying out, was the fire: the faggots were all burned through

in the middle and fallen down upon a little glowing heap, the ends still on the andirons and the flames flicking each other with a curious clapping pulsation like green streamers in the northern sky.

So I lay a long time quaking in my naked bed, the sweat pouring off me, yet cold in my bones, as if I had been couching on a doorstep all that drear night of December.

I must have dozed, yet it was a troubled unstable sleep with many startings and much uneasiness. But over in the wastes of the winter morning, perhaps about three of the clock, I was startled broad awake by such a crying as I had never heard before, breaking the deep silence of the night.

It was a cry so wild, so strange, and so loud that for a time my reasonable soul shook within me.

I could have sworn it came from the room next mine or even from immediately behind the arras where I had seen the dark figure vanish. But yet nothing more succeeded, and it seemed as if I might have heard the crying in my dreams. For the echoes of it lingered quivering in my ears as I sat up in bed, trembling, affrighted, and with all my night gear damp and chill about me as the frost and the outer blackness took stark hold on me.

There was no repetition of the terrible shriek which had awakened me. But instead I grew conscious of a baffled snarling, inhuman and cruel as the grave: it seemed like the complaint of a demon from whom a stronger hath snatched a coveted prey.

I dared not rise. I dared not lie still. My whole spirits were dashed, and subverted with untellable fear. Yet being but a boy I was more afraid of being left alone than of anything else. I thought that if I could only clasp a hand I should be safe and happy.

So in the red loom of the dying fire I rose, slipped on my shoes and jacket, and listened crouchingly by the door. I heard a moaning without which briefly and sobbingly stilled itself. Then came a whispering, a trampling, and the scuffling of linen sheets unfolded fresh from the napery cupboard.

At first I thought the noise was the work of spirits, and my heart was dead within my breast with fear. But presently I heard one cough. And by that I knew those who were without for humans. So I grew bold on the instant and feared them no more.

I desired to see them, even to speak with them. Then I took it in my head that a gleam came from behind the arras. The wall-hanging indeed waved as if some one were shaking it, holding the edge in their hand, or perhaps more exactly as if a light breathing wind were blowing it about.

Yet even then I dared not move, for that terrible cry, the sound of which had awaked me, rang still in my ears. And I seemed to hear as it had been several persons struggling together confusedly, as if one strove to win through into my room to be at me, and another, stronger and kindlier, restrained him.

Whereat, with the childish instinct of hiding, I slipped behind the arras and prayed that they might not find me.

Scarcely had I been a moment behind the hanging when I saw a strange thing before me. At the very place where I had seen the dark figure vanish was an opening in the wainscot. A little wicket door, long and narrow, stood half ajar, and a strong glow of light streamed in from the room adjacent.

I could hear the voices plainly now, and the human sound of them gave me courage. I stole forward and peeped round the swinging edge of the secret panel.

I looked into my grandfather's room, and there I, a little trembling lad, little more than a bairn, saw that which might have blasted the reason of a grown man to behold.

For I saw the young man Philip Stansfield stand by the bedside of his father, coolly wiping the blade of a knife with a sheet of paper out of the book which my grandfather had ever used to keep on a little stand by his bed-head wherever he slept. It was called, as well I knew, 'Baxter His Saint's Rest.'

And at the back with their feet upon a torn-down hanging were two women, one of them busy handling my grandfather's body, while the other with a crisp hissing sound unfolded fresh sheets for the bed out of a press in the wall. Sir James was dead—that I was sure of—though I had never before seen one dead. His eyes were open and stared stedfastly upward. His head wambled from side to side on his breast as the woman shifted him from one arm to the other, busily enduing him with his flannel night cleading.

This last was the white-faced woman whom I had seen earlier in the evening in James Brydson's change-house: Janet Mark, the wife of Saul Mark, was her name. The other I knew not by her countenance, but divined from a certain similarity of look that she was a sister or lifelong crony of the first.

More than once Janet Mark called to Philip Stansfield to help her with the body; but he only swore at her and would not, going on unconcernedly tearing fresh leaves from the 'Saint's Rest,' and polishing at his knife, breathing on it and rubbing in corners.

At last he finished the blade to his satisfaction.

'Now,' he said, 'we will carry this carrion out and throw it in the river. If it be found we will cast the blame upon Umphray Spurway, and be ready to swear that he did it, because he could not pay the rent and mails due upon his mills.'

So saying, Philip Stansfield took the body upon his back, and with the women going one before and one behind he staggered out of the room and down the stairs, taking no care to walk lightly, but rather stumbling heavily like a man who carries on his back a sack of corn.

It was found afterwards that he and his accomplices had locked and barred all in the house within their sleeping chambers, being as it were *fey* and desperate, running heedlessly great risks and trusting to the darkness of the night and the fear of the folk within doors.

When the murderer had gone halfway down the steps he rested his burden at a landing, and I heard him say, 'Janet, take the knife and go see if that deil's brat of mine is asleep in the Blue Room. And if not, cut his throat!'

I stood petrified for a moment, as if I felt already the edge of the blade touch my flesh. Then with a sharp access of terror I turned and fled back into the Blue Room, shutting the panel after me and dragging the arras into place. I crept under the bed-clothes and drew them about me in a heap.

The next moment I could hear the woman fumbling at the door. Then, finding it locked, she went into the apartment where I had seen them, and after many attempts found the spring of the panel, which she opened. I heard her feet steal towards me behind the hanging. I could not pray, I only lay and shut my eyes.

Presently the light of her candle flashed out of the dark like an illumination lying yellow upon the lids of my eyes. She crept to the bedside and I could hear her stoop and listen. I smelt the smell of raw spirits. A lock of her loosened hair fell across my face and tickled it, so that perforce I had to raise my hand and rub my nostrils. At this I thought I was done for. But it proved my salvation.

Either from the naturalness of the gesture she considered me to be asleep or was averse from more bloodshed. However that may be, she retreated step by step to the arras and disappeared behind it, a white gleam of candlelight lingering at the end by the door. I heard the panel click back and I was again alone.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE BODY ON THE ICE FLOE.

I LAY on my bed and chittered as with deadly cold. And even then I could hear heavy footsteps come and go down the hall and then the ponderous clang of a shut door. With that terror, momently doubled and trebled, of that house of fear came over me. I knew not at what moment the murderers might return and kill me. My grandfather dead—my father the murderer. I minded how that night he had called me the heir for whose sake he had been thrust out of his heritage. Surely (I thought) he will come back and make an end of me also. I rose and threw my clothes about me, my fingers scarce able to grasp the buttons, being grown numb and without power. The window opened upwards, and setting it to its limit I looked out, and lo, on the thin sprinkling of snow, I could see as it had been dark shapes dragging a heavy burden downwards towards the river.

And again at this moment the faintness came over me, and I lay all abroad on the cold floor beneath the window till, when I came to myself, I was almost frozen to death by reason of the stark rigors of the night added to the fears natural to my tender age.

All this while, even in the depths of my swoon, the voices came to me—now high, sharp, and quarrelsome, anon more laigh and fearsome, again like women laughing foolishly and without wit. And all over that house of New Milns there must have been those that heard, yet none ventured abroad to see, the things which Satan wrought by means of his followers.

But my heart beginning to beat fast in my side and sending (as I suppose) the quick blood pulsing to my feet and head, I determined that I would see what they did with my grandfather. I laid hold of the thick ivy branches without the window and scrambled down. It was a matter of eight or nine feet, and easy climbing.

Then being once among the black trunks of the fir trees that grew thick between me and the river down in the valley, I began to lose fear. For action and the resolve of the heart to do something (it matters not what) are fine solvents of terror. I went stumbling and tripping, now headlong, now crabwise on hands and knees, till I came within sight of Esk Water slipping along be-

tween its snowy banks, an edging of foot ice clinging to the banks grey-white and ragged, and the black water between dotted with little islands and tables of floating ice. For there had been a thaw up among the hills, and, according to its wont, the ice came down in floating shreds and patches.

And as I went on I found myself nearer to the fiendish laughter till it seemed to come from the farther side of a little plantation which hid the bridge from my view. The Old Bridge of New Milns was a one-arched, high-backed, narrow stone causeway thrown over the Esk a century or two before, being indeed one of the first bridges in that part of the country. When I saw it loom up through the trunks of the trees the thought came to me that if I could gain the centre of the archway before those who were carrying off my grandfather, I should be safe from all the powers of evil. For it is well known that even the fiends of hell themselves cannot pass over running water. It is not permitted to them.

So, running at full speed, I circumnavigated the noise, and as I went keeping pretty high up in the woods upon the carpet of pine needles I could see (as it were with the tail of my eye) the forms of demons struggling beneath on the edge of the dark water.

I had not presence of mind to think what it meant at the time, but it seemed to me that one shaped like a man beat one in woman's form, who struggled and laughed and kicked, while yet a third held her by the arm. On the snow there lay a dark lump, which I knew to be the poor corpse of my grandfather, thus harried and tossed about by these veritable fiends of the pit.

I had reached the coping of the bridge whilst these black shapes were still struggling beneath. I crossed to the further side, keeping in shelter of the little parapet. And then I felt more safe, for there was now running water between us. At the further side of the bridge were certain arches which had been half walled across when the bridge was built, and furnished with a fireplace and a chimney for poor wandering folk to lodge in—a kindly provision of a former age when the laws took cognisance of the indigent and the helpless as well as of the rich of the earth.

So keeping in the dark of the shadow I slipped into one of these, and there, sheltered from the wind and a little more at my ease, I watched what the murderous wretches did on the further side.

At last, between beating and chiding, the laughter of the

woman shape turned to most piteous wailing, as of a soul lost to the mercy of God. The weeping was that of a woman in deadly gripping pain, and it had so great an effect on me that out of sympathy, as it were, I whimpered like a dog. Help it I could not. Yet I kept the sound low for fear that they would hear me.

Then, leaving the woman, the man shape came to the edge of the water, and with a dark wand shaped like a shepherd's crook in his hand he gripped and drew inward towards him a cake of floating ice greater than the others. At first I feared that this was some cantrip by which they hoped to overpass the running water and come upon me in my hiding-place. But presently I saw that they regarded me not, nor indeed knew they were watched by mortal eye.

Then from my hiding-place I heard the leader rate the other two who were in the shape of women, saying that now that the job was done it behoved to finish it quickly and be gone. So at his word the two aided him to lift the dark heap from the ground and carry it painfully to the cake of ice which he had anchored with his shepherd's crook in a little sheltered bay at the lower side of the bridge. Upon this, with infinite care, they laid the body. And then the black shape that had chidden the others set the shank of his crook to the edge of the cake of ice and 'stelled' against it with all his might. I saw it turn slowly, like a wheel upon its axle. Then, with the black burden still upon it, pass swiftly out of my sight down the rush of Esk Water.

After that the company of demons (as in my fantasy I had come to think them) stood as it had been watching their strange ship and stranger cargo depart for another world. Thereafter I heard them clamber, crying and quarrelling as before up the bank, and so disappear out of my sight.

How I reached the Blue Chamber where I had been left to sleep I know not. I remember nothing whatever of the journey back. Yet I must have found my way through the pine trees out of the dark plantation and clambered again up the frost-bitten ivy. For the poor slut who made the morning fires found me stiff and cold, lying within my chamber, the window open, my face all scratched and bleeding, and the coverlets lying hither and thither as I had thrown them when I leaped up in my haste.

The morning had come richly up from the east. The horizon was rimmed red and orange, while all the valley swam in a subtle

haze, blue like milky turquoise. It was the Sabbath day, and folk were late astir, as is the custom.

The morning was so quiet that at first I thought my supper must have disagreed with me, and that I dreamed or doted. The murder I had seen done, and all the adventure of the bridge and the questionable demons now appeared unreal, till looking out I saw beneath me the trampled snow and felt the stiffness in all my limbs, and the bruises I had received when stumbling in the dark from tree to tree.

Yet for the life of me I could not find the panel through which I had looked into my grandfather's room. The wainscot was continuous and the arras hung quiet and unstirred in the grey light of morning. Almost I believed that Sir James, whom in my dream I had seen so foully murdered, was asleep in the next room, and would presently come knocking at my chamber door and bidding me rise and put on my clothes for family worship.

I went down the stairs and till I reached the front door found nothing amiss, save certain wet patches upon the polished floor where snow had melted, having been brought in upon the boots of careless folk.

Desolate indeed looked the wide promenade in front of the house, with its chill stone balustrades and the brown autumn leaves scattered about upon the thin snow. It was with a shudder that I passed down the avenue and through the gates towards the dwelling of Umphray Spurway at the miln house by the river side.

And even as I did so a man came running at full speed towards the house, crying that they had found Sir James lying frozen in Esk Water, his head down and all the breath quite gone out of his body.

After this I had not proceeded far when I saw two stand in the highway, at sight of whom I stopped. It was Philip Stansfield and the minister, Mr. John Bell. I went over into the field, as if I had lost somewhat, and creeping cautiously along with intent to pass them I heard by accident the matter of their discourse.

Philip Stansfield was wailing and lamenting to the minister that his poor father had of late gone quite distract in his mind.

'You yourself must have observed it,' he said. 'During the dark hours of last night he hath left his bed and is gone we know not where. A dirk or Highland dagger also is missing.'

'You fear that Sir James hath done himself a mischief. Woe is me! It is too probable. So late as yestreen he was bewailing his fate—and even blaming you, sir, as the source of all his miseries.'

'Alas, yes,' said Philip Stansfield, 'my poor father was led to think so by that evil-hearted Englishman, Umphray Spurway, who is behindhand with his rent. And if aught hath happened to my father, I am sure that he is at the bottom of it. And by God's grace I will make him hang for it!'

'A proper enough sentiment,' said the minister. 'I like not Episcopians myself.'

Then making a little detour I passed them and going some way farther down in the bed of the river I saw a little cloud of folk assembled, all most earnestly looking at something. I went down and mingled with them, but none took any notice of me. Nor was it likely. For there on his face, frozen in firmly on either side and the tails of his thick blue coat dabbling dankly in the smooth black water was the body of my grandfather Sir James Stansfield.

Then one Andrew Grieve that had been his baron bailie went in and broke the ice, and with many hands to help drew him to shore, a most dismal sight to see. He would have chafed his master's fingers and drawn off his boots, but Philip Stansfield, coming up at the moment, bade him desist, urging that it was useless and wicked to strive against the judgment of God.

Then the place being near to the cloth mill, Umphray Spurway came out, hearing the commotion. He was pulling his coat about his shoulders and buttoning his points like one who has not slept half enough.

At sight of him Philip Stansfield cried out, 'There is the murderer of my father. Seize him! Seize him!'

And all turned to look at Umphray Spurway, who came elbowing his way through the throng and saying, 'Now then! Now then!' after the wont of Yorkshiremen.

As soon as he saw the body he clapped down on his knees beside it, crying out, 'My friend—my poor friend and benefactor—who hath done this thing?'

And the tears ran down his cheeks, for, though little given to show affection, this man loved my grandfather.

'Seize the murderer! Hold him!' cried Philip Stansfield. And at his word two of his faction, Saul Mark and George Johnston (called the 'Devil's Tailor'), came forward to lay hands on him.

But the Englishman heaved himself up like a lion among jackals and such like.

His chin stuck out squarely with the red beard upon it, and the brown hair fell over his shoulders like the mane of a lion.

'Have any of you a word to say to me?' he cried in a great voice. And from before the mere wind of his uprising Saul Mark and the 'Devil's Tailor' fell back.

'Have you a word to say to me, Philip Stansfield?' he said again, turning on the young man.

'I proclaim this man my father's murderer!' cried the young man. 'Seize him and take him to the Great House. There we will find means to make him speak the truth concerning this matter.'

And at his words there was a certain movement among those retainers of Sir James who stood near. Perhaps they thought that it might be as well to be friends with the son now that the father was no more.

So, led by Saul Mark and George Johnston, a second time they drew near to seize him.

'I think not,' he said aloud, and drawing the whistle from his bosom, which he ever wore on a lanyard about his neck, he blew three shrill blasts upon it, as seamen are wont to do. And out of the mills and little low houses about there issued a swarm of weavers, dyers, fullers, and all the workmen whom Umphray Spurway had brought with him from England. Every man had in his hand such weapons as he had made shift to snatch most readily.

'Now, sir,' said Umphray Spurway, 'will you take me now?'

'The sheriff will take you soon enough and hang you high for this cruel murder!' cried Philip Stansfield, frowning deeply to find himself thus baffled. 'Take up the body of my father and bring it to his own chamber. God will discover the truth!'

'Aye—that He will!' cried Umphray Spurway, standing like a pillar of fire among his men as the sun of that winter morning touched his red beard.

And deep in my heart I thought, '*And I will help Him!*'

*(To be continued.)*

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